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**Czech Perceptions
of the Perspective of EU Membership:
Havel vs. Klaus**

PETER BUGGE

RSC No. 2000/10

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EUI Working Paper RSC No. 2000/10

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Printed in Italy in February 2000
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50016 San Domenico (FI)
Italy**

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE
FOR ADVANCED STUDIES**

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BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

Robert Schuman Centre

Programme on Eastern Europe

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This paper was written within the project on The Eastward Enlargement of the European Union: the Cases of the Baltic States - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which was set up by the Robert Schuman Centre through the support of the Academy of Finland. For information on this and other projects on Eastern Europe at the Robert Schuman Centre, please contact Professor Jan Zielonka (zielonka@datacomm.iue.it).

1. Introduction

The events of November 1989 launched the Czechs into a truly revolutionary transformation process. Within a very short time the old order virtually collapsed, and the new political leaders as well as the population at large were confronted with the complex task of creating and adapting to a new social, economic, political, national and, last but not least, global order. As the country was liberated from its subordinate position in the relatively closed and static USSR-led "socialist camp" it was also immediately exposed to an incalculable multitude of new impulses and pressures, possibilities and constraints in all these spheres.

The Czech émigré writer Josef Škvorecký has suggested the phrase "*from the zoo to the jungle*" as a metaphor for this process, which created a great need for some fixed points of reference. Since the "velvet revolution" the Czechs have therefore witnessed an intensive struggle not just about political and economic power in the country, but also about the broader interpretation of these events. One might call it a fight about a "meta-narrative", about the formation of a discourse that could make sense of the enormous changes and justify political action. A very important aspect of this has been the interpretation of the nation's identity and role in the surrounding world. This requested the creation and reinforcement of a new perception of nation and state (accentuated by the split of Czechoslovakia in 1992) and the accommodation or "opening" of this national self-perception to the consequences of the "globalisation" that the country was exposed to after the fall of communism.

In the Czech case these narratives have focussed intensively on "Europe" as a metaphorical "home" for the nation and on "europeanisation" as a label for the desired accommodation to the surrounding world. As the then Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus expressed it in December 1993, "*the question of our position in Europe today and in the future is in fact the question of our national and state identity*".¹ The slogan of a "*return to Europe*" is a fine example of this use of Europe as a metaphor. In the perspective of homecoming all the new things that were to be introduced - from a new political system to new habits of everyday life - were domesticised and given historical credibility, and with all its connotations of the prodigal son the slogan also contained a clear appeal to "Europe" for acceptance.

At a more concrete political level, the EC/EU inevitably became a centre of gravity and point of reference for the whole transformation. Shortly after

¹ Česká republika a myšlenka evropské integrace, speech at the reception of the Konrad Adenauer Prize, Prague 21.12.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), 149-54, quotation on p.152.

coming to power in November 1989 the new Czechoslovak leaders expressed their wish for membership, and this has remained official Czechoslovak (and since 1993 Czech) policy ever since. It took, however, a long and complicated process before the EU in 1997 complied with these aspirations and decided to initiate negotiation talks in late March 1998 with the Czech Republic and five other countries.

The theme of this paper is the evolution of a Czech discourse on Europe and the EU from 1989 to 1997 with an emphasis on the later years. Many actors - politicians, writers and journalists, scholars and others - have taken part in its formation, but it seems fair to suggest that the two key figures in the given period have been Václav Havel and Václav Klaus. Both have had high political offices (Havel as Czechoslovak and later Czech President, Klaus as Czechoslovak Minister of Finance and then Czech Prime Minister). Both have very actively propagated their views at home and abroad, since the evolving narrative has had to be addressed both to the Czech population and to the surrounding world. Also, in much the two represent two different approaches to politics, two different views of the world, and as a consequence two different attempts at creating authoritative narratives about the Czechs and Europe/the EU.

Most of the following will therefore consist in a close analysis of the discourses of Václav Havel and Václav Klaus on Europe, the EU and the Czech Republic as they can be detected through a careful reading of speeches and articles, political declarations etc. The aim is to present a detailed picture of how these two key actors have striven to develop authoritative interpretations of the long process that now seems to result in Czech membership of the EU. Other main political actors will then be more briefly introduced before some general conclusions are made. But first a brief outline of developments in Czech EC/EU policies since 1989 and of decision-making in Czech foreign policy is offered in order to present a setting for these discourses.

The paper is thus confined to a few key actors from the Czech political elite. It abstains from discussing the "mass perception" of these questions, including public opinion about the EU and Czech membership as measured in Euro-barometers and other polls. To some extent this is justifiable, since for the whole period Czech debates about Europe and the EU have been confined to some very small groups. Also, these elites to a large extent establish the parameters (if not necessarily the attitudes) that will set a framework for a later broader public debate about Czech membership before a possible referendum. Unfortunately it also goes beyond the scope of the present investigation to study the extent to which the discourses of Havel and Klaus find resonance in the "informed debating public".

2. Czech Relations with the EC/EU

In general terms, one may discern three phases in Czech(-oslovak) policies towards the EC/EU and Europe at large since 1989. The first phase, lasting until 1992 and rhetorically expressed in the slogan of a “*return to Europe*”, was characterised by the following priorities:

First of all there was an urgent wish to liberate the country from Soviet hegemony, starting with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovak territory, and to break with the institutions of the socialist past, i.e. the Warsaw Pact and the CMEA (COMECON). This was all achieved by 1991. Secondly, in the policies of “homecoming”, utopianism mixed with pragmatism in the sense that Czechoslovak leaders oscillated between calls for new all-European co-operative structures (a “natural” expectation now the “unnatural” division of Europe into hostile blocs was being abandoned), and a wish to join already existing western European structures, primarily the EC and the Council of Europe. Utopianism was primarily to be found in the sphere of security politics, where the dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact was initially envisaged, and the CSCE presented as the nucleus of a new security system. Already in May 1990, however, President Havel acknowledged the vitality of NATO, and from 1991 Czechoslovak leaders began to advocate Czechoslovak membership of the organisation.²

The “utopian” line of thought also briefly made itself felt in the attitude to the Council of Europe. Membership of the Council was a main Czechoslovak priority, because of the strong emphasis on human rights and democracy in the new Czechoslovak foreign policy and because admission, unlike with the EC, was possible even within a short time perspective.³ Speaking to the Council in Strasbourg in May 1990 Václav Havel claimed that he could “*see no reason why your Parliamentary Assembly and your executive bodies could not be the core around which a future European Confederation would crystallise.*”⁴ This idea of the Council of Europe, rather than the EC, as the core of politically united Europe

² See Šedivý (1994/95), Bráč (1992), and Cottey (1995), Chapter 5. The “memoirs” of Jaroslav Šedivý, Foreign Minister October 1997 - July 1998, about the first year of Czechoslovak foreign policy making after November 1989 focus almost exclusively on these security issues (Šedivý 1997).

³ Czechoslovakia did become a member in February 1991 and even after the division of the country, the Czech Republic has been very active in the Council. Bráč (1992), p.126 ff. See also the home-page of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Informace o radě Evropy <<http://www.czech.cz/czech/144.htm>> (as of September 1998).

⁴ Speech to the Council of Europe, May 10, 1990; quoted from Havel (1997b), p.42; Czech original in Havel (1990), 114-29, quote on p.125.

was very similar to the visions on the role of the CSCE in the field of security, and it was brought up occasionally in 1990-1991.

Closer and better ties to the EC were a major priority. Before November 1989 Czechoslovak relations with the EC had been modest, even in comparison with the neighbouring socialist countries. Diplomatic relations were established in September 1988 and a trade agreement signed in December that year. At the same time, however, a far more favourable agreement on trade and co-operation between the EC and Hungary entered into force, and in July 1989 an ambitious aid programme, PHARE, was set up for the reform countries Poland and Hungary. It thus became a key issue for the new Czechoslovak leadership to join ranks with Hungary and Poland. In late December 1989, Prime Minister Marián Čalfa even sent a letter to Jacques Delors asking for early talks about "*possible forms of affiliation to the European Community*".⁵ Delors replied with a general warning against exaggerated expectations and premature steps, which led to a moderation of Czechoslovak demands. In March 1990 a trade agreement similar to Hungary's from 1989 was concluded and in May Czechoslovakia was included in the PHARE programme.

Czechoslovak foreign politics in these years was characterised by a great emphasis on regional co-operation with Hungary and Poland in what came to be known as the "*Visegrád group*",⁶ both in dismantling of the structures of old and in dealings with the EC. The pressure from the three countries for closer and more committed relations with the EC led from August 1990 to negotiations about a new kind of Association Agreement, a so-called "*Europe Agreement*", and the three held frequent consultations during the negotiations, resulting also in the issuing of joint memoranda and policy statements.

In December 1991, at a common ceremony, bilateral Europe Agreements were signed between the EC and Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. In the preceding negotiations Czechoslovakia had interpreted the Europe Agreements as a means to support the country's political and economic reforms and as a vehicle to EC accession. The EC, however, refused to include the membership perspective in the Agreement so as a compromise, membership was mentioned in the preamble as a Czechoslovak objective. The Agreement also opened up a continuing political dialogue. Economically the Agreement was not altogether satisfactory from a Czechoslovak perspective, since a number of sensitive sectors were excepted from the promised general opening of the EC market to the

⁵ Quoted from Brach (1992), p.123.

⁶ On Visegrád see Rhodes (1997), Rhodes (1998a), Leška et al. (1997), p.113 f., Inotai (1994) and Kolankiewicz (1994).

Visegrád three. Importantly, the Agreement obliged the associated countries to adjust their legal systems to the *acquis communautaire*.⁷

The first phase may be said to have ended with the change of government after the elections in June 1992 and the succeeding division of Czechoslovakia. The new Czech government with Václav Klaus as Prime Minister and Josef Zieleniec as Foreign Minister was dominated by economists with a very different background from that of the "old" dissident elites, and the change of political course was pronounced. Vladimír Handl has compared the new government's turn towards a more reserved perception of the "*co-operative and the institutional potential of international politics*" to a move from the theoretical position of "*liberal institutionalism*" to that of "*realism*". This was expressed in concrete terms in an outright rejection of any Visegrád co-operation or "collectivism" (except for inter-governmental agreements on trade) and in many a critical remark about the "Maastricht Treaty EU".⁸

The new government believed that the Czech Republic had better chances of joining the EC/EU quickly (still an official priority) without Slovakia and other Visegrád neighbours, and it was very optimistic in its evaluation of the Czech performance, especially in the economic field which was considered crucial to EU accession. Thus Klaus could say that the Czech Republic was in no hurry to join the present EU and at the same time declare that "*we will be ready to join the EU earlier than the EU will be ready to accept us*".⁹

At the concrete "bilateral" level of Czech-EU relations results were more modest. The Klaus government believed that the Europe Agreement (which was

⁷ For a detailed account of the Czechoslovak negotiation strategy and an evaluation of the result see Ježek (1995a). See also Ježek (1995b), Had et al. (1997), p.34 ff, and Mangott (1995) p.100 f. In a later Czech evaluation, Jiří Zemánek expresses the view that "*competition between [the Visegrád countries] increased the importance of the political element to the detriment of economic results* (Zemánek et al. (1997), p.147. This view was also typical for the line of thinking of the Klaus government.

⁸ Handl (1995), p.130 ff., 133 ff; see also Handl (1993), p.129 f. and Cihlár & Hrich (1995), p.333. Václav Klaus even claimed that Visegrád was "*an artificial creation of the West*", and although this viewpoint is exaggerated and misleading there certainly were signals from J. Delors and the EC after 1989 that such a co-operation was appreciated. In the preparations for the Copenhagen summit in June 1993 the Visegrád countries therefore still acted collectively, but in the end Visegrád was abandoned not only by Klaus, but also by the EU, which in Copenhagen spoke only of "*states with Europe Agreements*" (this now included Rumania and Bulgaria) without paying attention to regional subgroups. See Rhodes (1998b), Royen (1994), p.403 f, Ježek (1995b), p.270 ff, and Handl (1995), p.140.

⁹ Klaus for International Herald Tribune, Feb. 1, 1993, quoted from Handl (1995), p.136, note 22, see also p.134, ad Leška et.al. (1997), p.114.

not ratified by Czechoslovakia before the split) could simply be transferred to the two new states, but in the end a new Agreement had to be negotiated which in some respects was less favourable to the Czech Republic than the previous one.¹⁰ 1993 nevertheless did bring a breakthrough for all Europe Agreement countries in the sense that the June 1993 Copenhagen summit recognised for the first time their wish to become members of the Union (the abolition of some trade barriers was also accelerated). But membership requirements were defined in very general terms and included a reference to the Union's "*capacity to absorb new members*".¹¹ So although Copenhagen was a welcome step forward, there was still no time-table for membership, nor any specific guidelines for the preparation thereof. Nor did 1994 bring the Czechs much closer to membership, in spite of a decision in Essen in December to improve the "structured dialogue" with the applicant countries and develop a strategy for membership preparation.¹²

In sum then, the second phase, which lasted until 1995, was characterised by a certain standstill in Czech-EU relations. Government declarations gave a rather contradictory picture of calls for an early admission on the one hand and vocal "Euro-scepticism" on the other. The net effect in practical politics was summarised by one critical observer as "*Euro-passivity*".¹³

By 1995 new dynamics began to make themselves felt on both sides, introducing the third phase which may be said to have lasted until the December 1997 decision to open concrete accession talks. The Czech government gradually came to understand that the "solitary" approach did not bring the expected results and that its boasting might be counterproductive. Thus, Hans van den Broek at one point had to tell Klaus that "*it is not the European Union which wants to join the Czech Republic*".¹⁴ As Rhodes argues, the Czechs had also underestimated western interest in Poland and the fact that the main goal for western Europe was to extend political stability eastwards, which could best be served by an enlargement in groups. Finally, especially from 1996 onwards, the growing problems of the Czech economy and of the Klaus government led to a moderation in tone.¹⁵

A renewed Czech interest in regional co-operation and co-ordination began to make itself felt. In particular, relations to Poland improved markedly and the

¹⁰ The Agreement was signed in October 1993 and went into force on 1 February 1995. Handl (1995), p.136 f., Handl (1993), p.130 f.

¹¹ Agenda 2000 (1997), 1.

¹² See Lippert & Becker (1997), de Weydenthal (1995), p.300 ff., Büscher & von Ow (1995).

¹³ Jakš (1994), 148.

¹⁴ Quoted from Rhodes (1998b), note 41.

¹⁵ Rhodes (1998b), see also Leška et.al. (1997), p.111 for a similar analysis.

co-operation in CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement - originally a Visegrád economic offshoot) gathered momentum. Václav Havel's speech from February 1995 on the Czech-German relationship, which was to bring new dynamism to the tepid Czech relations to their most important neighbour, may also be seen in this light. On the inner lines too there was increased activity: a Government Committee for European Integration with a Working Committee and several Working Groups was created by 1 January 1995, new initiatives were taken to accelerate the approximation of Czech laws with EC laws, and finally on 23 January 1996, the Czech government submitted its application for EU-membership (eventually as the last but one of the ten central and east European applicants; only Slovenia came later).¹⁶

There were also significant new initiatives from the EU. The White Paper of May 1995 finally offered specific suggestions for how to prepare for participation at the inner market, and the Madrid summit of December 1995 decided that concrete accession talks were to begin six months after the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Conference. The Commission was also asked to prepare an evaluation of the readiness for membership of each applicant country which was to be presented immediately after the Conference. The *Agenda 2000* was presented after the Amsterdam summit and in December 1997 the decision was made to start negotiation talks with the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus in the so-called first round.¹⁷

3. Decision-makers and Decision-making in Czech Foreign Politics

An urgent task for the new political elites after 1989 was to redefine the political system, including the relationship between President and Government (and between the Federation and the two Republics, which eventually before the split of Czechoslovakia both created their own "Foreign Ministries"). Political tradition from the inter-war years and the structures inherited from the "socialist" Czechoslovak Constitution from 1960 suggested a parliamentary, rather than a presidential model. But until 1992 the President had a very strong influence, not the least upon Czechoslovak foreign politics. This owed much to Václav Havel's personality, but Havel also created an Office of the President which in the

¹⁶ See Zemánek et al. (1997). For a more critical evaluation of law approximation policies see Desný (1997). See also "Vztahy ČR-EU" on the home-page of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <<http://www.czech.cz/czech/141.htm>> (as of September 1998).

¹⁷ *Agenda 2000* (1997). Had et al. (1997), p.39-48, von Ow (1996), von Ow (1997). For a general survey of EC/EU policies towards central and eastern Europe see Sedelmeier & Wallace (1996).

unstable constitutional situation was seen by some critics as a “parallel power structure” beside the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similarly, the critique of a “lack of professionalism” in Czechoslovak foreign policy was mostly aimed at Havel’s advisors, although the Ministry too struggled with a lack of competent staff. In spite of occasional bad co-ordination, conflicts between the President and the Ministry were few due to the close personal ties between Havel and Foreign Minister Jiří Dienstbier, both signatories of Charter 77.¹⁸

The Czech Constitution of December 16, 1992 establishes a parliamentary political system. Presidential powers are limited, but in foreign relations the President retains a key constitutional role to play. As “*Head of State*” (Art. 54), the President shall “*represent the State with respect to other countries*”, “*negotiate and ratify international treaties*” and “*be the supreme commander of the armed forces*” (Art. 63-1, a-c). Article 63-3, however, holds that presidential decisions in these fields “*shall be valid only if countersigned by the Prime Minister or by a member of the Government so authorised by the Prime Minister*”. The Constitution thus forces the government and the President to co-operate, especially in foreign politics where the President as Head of State represents and is responsible for a political course developed by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the government.¹⁹

Assessments of the actual foreign policy making process in the Czech Republic tend to be critical. Handl and Moorhouse agree that decision making is highly centralised. There is little delegation of tasks and little use of or even dialogue with experts, social interest groups or the general public. As also the pool of professionals is narrow, even in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (since, as Handl complains, the education of new professionals is neglected) the outcome has often been a policy marked by a lack of realism and with problems of communication, both with the EU, and between the Czech key actors.²⁰

¹⁸ Břach (1992), p.15 ff., 113 ff., Šedivý (1997).

¹⁹ Handl (1995), 144 f., Gerloch et al. (1994), 101 ff.; English translation of the Constitution from the home-page of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <<http://www.czech.cz/english/constitution.html>> (as of September 1998). According to Handl, the role of the Parliament in foreign policy is rather limited, although of course the Parliament has its own Committee for Foreign Affairs (as the Senate its Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security). It also has the Parliamentary Association Committee, a forum for members of the Czech and the European Parliaments meeting regularly twice a year, see Desný (1997), 51.

²⁰ Moorhouse (1996), 367-71. Handl argues that the open disagreement and contradictions in the declarations of top government politicians may be influenced by the political appointment of Deputy Ministers seeking (as there is a coalition government) to profile their own party, while Pehe speaks of a tradition being taken up from the First Republic of rigid partisanship leading to a parcelling out of the government into some kind of party allocations, Handl

As early as in September 1991 the Czechoslovak government decided, followed by the Czech government in October, that all drafts of new laws should aim at compatibility with EC/EU law and that specific reasons should be given for any incompatibility. The decision was important as proof of the Czechoslovak will to join the EC, and because it made EC law a source of inspiration for Czechoslovak (and Czech) legal reform at a time when most of the reform programme was still on the drawing board.²¹ Later figures have often been presented to demonstrate the high percentage of Czech laws already compatible with EC law, but according to Desný the project of legal self-approximation has suffered from serious flaws.²²

In 1995 the government seemed to react to the problems or criticism. The White Paper brought more specific guidance from the EU, and in March that year the government adopted a timetable of measures to be taken to accelerate the process of legal approximation. Also, it began to make more extensive use of legal assistance from the PHARE programme, which greatly increased the ministries' access to information about EC law and about the overall state of legal approximation.²³ The creation in 1995 of the Government Committee for European Integration (headed by the Prime Minister and aided by a Working Committee and twenty three Working Groups) also suggests a new concern for the domestic preparation of membership, although the Government Committee has met only once or twice a year. The interim Tošovský government tried to speed up preparations before the commencement of accession talks in late March 1998, but Czech press comments were still sceptical of the quality of preparations.²⁴

(1995), 145-7; Pehe (1998), 63.

²¹ Zemánek (1997), 154; Desný (1997), 45; Cihlár & Hrich (1995), 328.

²² Most importantly, the government's purely economic approach to the transformation of Czech society has led to a negligence of law as such and thus of the consistency of the legal framework. Moreover, a lack of resources (financial and personal) has resulted in severe weaknesses in the implementation of the law. Also, there was little guidance to get from the EC/EU as how to conceive this legal reform in details. Desný (1997), 45 f. For approximation figures from 1994 see Zemánek (1997), 155.

²³ Zemánek (1997), p.155 f. Desný (1997), p.47 f. is full of praise of the PHARE programme but critical of the implementation on the Czech side. See also the evaluation in Agenda 2000 (1997), p.7. A government decision ("*usnesení*") of July 16, 1997 (No. 432/97) gives more specific methodological instructions to all ministries for how to ensure the continued legal approximation. Full Czech texts of this and other government decisions can be found at the home-page of the Czech government: <<http://www.vlada.cz/>>.

²⁴ Vláda se dohodla, jak bude země jednat s unií ("The government has decided how the country will negotiate with the Union"), *Mladá Fronta Dnes*, March 3, 1998, p.2, Michal Mocek: Vláda bere unii příliš klidně ("The government takes the Union too easy"), *Mladá*

One may conclude that the Czech approach to EU questions has suffered from an insufficient co-ordination of policies as well as from an insufficient implementation of legal and other decisions. According to both Desný and the Agenda 2000, many problems are caused by the lack of public administration modernisation or even plans or policies for it, which again may be seen as a result of the negligence of the public administration by the Klaus government, the inclination to highly centralised decision-making and the general self-assured attitude of Czech politicians to their country's readiness for membership.²⁵

4. Perceptions of the EC/EU in the Political Elites

As argued Czech foreign policy elites are very narrow. In terms of general policy making one might, especially after the creation of the Czech Republic in 1993, feel tempted to focus almost exclusively on the government, especially on the Prime and the Foreign Ministers, while the role of the opposition has been marginal. The President has, however, remained important, not the least because Havel after 1989 soon possessed himself of the field of foreign politics. Since then he has successfully used his office to become the representative face and voice of the Czech Republic abroad, as well as a key interpreter of its foreign policies to a domestic audience.

4.1. The President

At home and abroad Václav Havel incarnates the continuity of Czech post-communist policies, despite the split of Czechoslovakia in 1992 and changes of government. Here, we shall focus first on his views (and the views of other prominent dissidents) before 1989, then on developments in his perceptions and attitudes during the two years of his Czechoslovak presidency, when most of his foreign policy perceptions took shape), and finally on developments in his views as Czech president since 1993.

Fronta Dnes, March 4, 1998, 12. Desný (1997), 50 ff. has a good survey of the bodies (domestic and bilateral) dealing with the Czech integration to the EU, see also the home-page of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Vztahy ČR-EU:

<<http://www.czech.cz/czech/141.htm>> (as of September 1998). Interestingly, the home-page of the Czech government does not even list the Government Committee for European Integration, while there is extensive information about the Government Committee for the preparation of NATO membership. See: <<http://www.vlada.cz/>> (as of September 1998).

²⁵ In the words of Agenda 2000: "Confident in its progress towards meeting the obligations of EU membership, the Czech Republic has at times shown signs of reluctance to acknowledge difficulties and seek a collaborative approach to resolving them" (p.8); see also p.105.

4.1.1. Perceptions of Europe and the EC in the Dissident Elites Before 1989

Until November 1989 the communist Czechoslovak regime's approach to European developments remained deeply conservative, aiming at the preservation of a pre-Gorbachev status-quo and paying only lip service to his rhetorics of a "common European house"²⁶. By contrast, there was a lively debate about Europe in dissident circles, especially in the mid-1980's. Much attention was paid to the nature of "central Europe" - the key "victim" of the bipolar division into an "eastern" and a "western" Europe, it was held - a debate launched by the Czech émigré writer Milan Kundera in 1984.²⁷ But in the domestic discussion, in which Havel, Dienstbier and other later prominent political actors took part, attempts were also made to analyse the political situation in Europe as a whole and make suggestions for its improvement. Dienstbier's book *Dreaming about Europe* from 1985 is a particularly remarkable example of this, whereas Václav Havel before 1989 largely confined himself to general reflections upon the present state of modern societies east and west of the "Iron Curtain".

In their political reflections the dissidents focussed almost exclusively on security issues and on seeking ways to overcome the division of Europe. In their call for a united Europe without nationalism, Dienstbier and Charter 77 also explicitly recognised the German right to unification within existing borders.²⁸

The attitude to western Europe and particularly to the USA was mainly critical. The West was blamed for its passivity and for its interest in preserving status-quo. This view also affected the perception of the western European

²⁶ Robejsek (1990), 29 ff.

²⁷ Kundera's main argument is, put very briefly, that Russia (in the shape of the Soviet Union) represents *another civilisation*, totally alien to (western) Europe, and that the Russian occupation of central Europe since 1945 is not only military and political, but also cultural. This is fatal since central Europe represents a special, *vitaly important* part of the western European historical and cultural experience. Thus European culture *as such* is threatened by the Russian politics of cultural annihilation. The West, however, is rapidly abandoning the values upon which its modern civilisation had rested for 400 years. Here culture has "already bowed out" and a "postcultural" era begun, and in being blind to the central European tragedy western Europe demonstrates that it has forgotten the very essence that makes Europe itself a value. see Kundera (1984).

²⁸ Dienstbier (1986; 1990 edn.), p.63 ff. Brach follows how these ideas influenced Czechoslovak attitudes to German unification in 1989-1990 (Brach (1992), p.57 ff.). Rhodes, who brings a good survey of the character of the "idea of central Europe" in the mid-1980's, argues with Melvin Croan that these ideas "*found little resonance with the general population of any of these countries*", since "*ordinary people remained much more receptive to nationalism, materialism, and even American popular culture*"; see Rhodes (1997), Chapter 2, note 91.

integration process and the EC, in which there was generally a low interest. Thus Dienstbier, quoting the Polish journalist Dawid Warszawski, criticised the foundations of western European integration for being “*demoralising, economically restrictive and politically without much perspective*”, as long as their price was the slavery of the other half of Europe and as long as “a united Europe” and “European unification” in the western European political dictionary referred only to western Europe.²⁹ Dienstbier did see in the EEC an “*expression of a certain emancipation of the [participating] western European states, which contains potential possibilities for greater political enforcement*”, but he could also blame the EEC for being an instrument of the USA to secure the consolidation of the bloc system.³⁰

Attitudes to contemporary politics often mixed utopianism with a conservative anti-modernism. Dienstbier had a touch of it, but the trend was most explicit in Havel’s writings, which often linked the crisis of the “post-totalitarian” Czechoslovak regime to a general crisis of “modern humanity”. Havel and Dienstbier both rejected the idea that it made sense to “*renew, create and copy the domestic political systems of the western European countries*”,³¹ and in 1978 Havel described a radical political alternative which in his opinion was already taking shape in the “post-democratic” forms of organisation of the dissidents.

After his return from prison in 1983 Havel moderated his critique of western European democracies. He remained sceptical of “*modern rationalism and modern science*” and pointed to the bewilderment of “*democratic western*

²⁹ Dienstbier (1986; 1990 edn.), p. 117.

³⁰ Dienstbier (1986; 1990 edn.), p. 116, p. 125. In his portrait of the EC Dienstbier focuses at least as much on its limitations as on its achievements, although he is not against political integration. He also writes that in the globalisation process “*Europe can only obtain an equal position as a cultural and civilisational whole. This does not have to be a United States of Europe, nor a federation or a confederation, although that too may at a certain degree of development be a serious and promising possibility*” (p.22). The content of the monthly samizdat journal *Lidové Noviny* in 1988-1989 is yet another indicator of the low interest in the EC. References are scarce and EC developments are not monitored. For example Dienstbier’s article “*A Chance for Europe*” (“*Šance pro Evropu*”) from August 31, 1989 remarks about the plan to remove internal borders between the EC countries before 1993 only that western Europe should not forget that “Europe” cannot be created without its “other half”.

³¹ Dienstbier (1986; 1990 edn.), p.91. In his big essay from 1978, *The Power of the Powerless* (*Moc bezmocných*), Havel comes close to making a virtue of the communist misery: “*There is no real evidence that Western democracy, that is, democracy of the traditional parliamentary type, can offer solutions that are any more profound. It may even be said that the more room there is in the Western democracies (compared to our world) for the genuine aims of life, the better the crisis is hidden from people and the more deeply do they become immersed in it*”, Havel (1978; 1991a edn.), p.207 f.

Europe” vis-à-vis the consequences of this its own “ambiguous export”,³² but in 1985 Havel noticed the substantial difference in degrees of freedom in western and eastern Europe. He called a full commitment to “the ideal of a democratic Europe as a friendly community of free and independent nations” the “sole meaningful way to genuine European peace”.³³

Havel followed up on this at the reception of the Erasmus Prize in 1986. To overcome the division of the continent, secure the sovereignty and equal rights of all European nations, as well as political democracy and social justice, Havel called for the courage to demand the change of the seemingly unchangeable, i.e. the bloc system. He also demanded a new popular “European awareness” without which government initiatives could never bring an undivided Europe closer. To Havel, Europe was an “undivided and indivisible” spiritual, cultural and historical unity, a finely woven tissue of mostly small nations. This meant, as argued also by Dienstbier, that western Europeans had to understand that their own problems (such as the nuclear threat) could not be solved without a solution to the eastern European problems. This was as close as Havel came before 1989 to giving a political vision of a new Europe.³⁴

4.1.2. The formation of Havel's Views 1990-1992

Most importantly, Havel soon embraced the idea of European unity. Speaking to the Polish *Sejm* on 25 January 1990 he still described the Europe to which the central European countries wanted to return “as an amicable community of independent nations and democratic states, a Europe that is stabilised, not divided into blocs and pacts, a Europe that does not need to be defended by superpowers”,³⁵ i.e. in terms similar to those of 1985 as a Europe based on “traditional” democratic nation states. Soon, however, Havel raised the perspective of European political integration, as in Strasbourg in May when he suggested that with a new “Helsinki-based” security system “Europe could relatively swiftly

³² See his essay *Politics and Conscience (Politika a svědomí)*, Havel (1984; 1991a edn.), p.252, 258. Here he also calls the totalitarian regimes “the avant-garde of a global crisis of this civilisation, first European, then Euro-American, and ultimately global” (p.260). Havel’s writings thus contain a tension between a radical rejection of modernity as such as the source of man’s alienation from the “natural world” (“*Lebenswelt*”), including the rejection of contemporary forms of politics as mere expressions of a technology of power, and his own commitment to principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, all outcomes of modernity.

³³ Havel (1985; 1991a edn.), p. 314.

³⁴ Havel (1986), p. 85-90.

³⁵ Projev v polském Sejmu a Senátu; printed in Havel (1990), pp.39-46, quotation on p.44. English translation from <<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1990/2501.html>>.

become politically integrated as a democratic community of democratic states".³⁶

In his essay from 1991, *Summer Meditations*, Havel went further. He spoke of the unique chance for the continent to become "*one big community, based on the principle of 'unity in diversity'*" and called the idea of a European confederation a step in the right direction.³⁷ In the same process, Havel downplayed the role of the nation state. "Dreaming" about the future of Czechoslovakia in fifteen years time he described a situation where the EC already had a strongly integrated political leadership, where borders had become a mere formality and where many legal and other competences were delegated to either a supra-national or a regional level, i.e. a harmonious vision of a federal Europe.³⁸

Political unity was, according to Havel, not just politically advantageous, it followed logically from Europe's status as *one civilisation*, based on a shared culture, to which the central and eastern European countries had also for centuries contributed, until they were brutally forced to depart from their natural path. Their "return to Europe" was thus historically legitimate as a return to where they already belonged.³⁹

Havel also sought to delimit this civilisation and determine Europe's relations to the USA and the USSR, the two super-powers that the dissidents had held responsible for the division of Europe. After 1989, Havel's view of the USA was unequivocally positive. But in his speech to the US Congress in February 1990 he stressed that Europe should "*at last be able to stand guard for itself*",⁴⁰ i.e. without American soldiers in Europe. In May 1990 in Strasbourg he went on to describe a new peaceful multi-polar security order which "*would establish a large, European connecting link between the powerful North American continent*

³⁶ Quoted from Havel (1997b), p.41; Czech original quote in Havel (1990), p.124. Similarly, in a speech to the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly on 29 June 1990, Havel mentioned the "*genuine hope of a politically integrated peaceful and democratic Europe*." Projev ve Federálním shromáždění; printed in Havel (1990), pp.151-183, quotation on p.171.

³⁷ Havel (1991b), p.63, p.67.

³⁸ Havel (1991b), p.87.

³⁹ See Havel's speech at the reception of the Charlemagne Prize, Aachen 9 May 1991; printed in Havel (1992), pp.77-80. In *Summer Meditations* Havel comes close to an historical teleology when writing that this "return" to political and cultural values that had developed in democratic western Europe in the last decades was "*a return of nations who were violently alienated from their own traditions, roots and ideals, from themselves, a return to the path, on which they already once walked or longed to walk or were potentially predetermined to walk as inhabitants of the same European cultural space*." Havel (1991b), p.64. There are clear parallels to Kundera here (see note 27), although Havel's teleology is an optimistic one, while Kundera's is apocalyptic.

⁴⁰ Quoted from Havel (1997b), p.13; Czech original in Havel (1990), pp.51-61, quote on p.54.

and the rapidly changing and liberating community of nations of today's Soviet Union".⁴¹ In 1991, however, when Czechoslovakia began to express its interest in NATO membership, new accents were heard. In May in Aachen and again in *Summer Meditations* Havel stressed how Europe was "*civilisationally deeply tied to the North American continent, her younger brother*" and how it was necessary to preserve these ties.⁴²

The attitude to the USSR was more ambiguous. In the US Congress and elsewhere Havel spoke of the necessity to help the USSR and warned against its isolation, but it was not clear if he saw the USSR as a *partner*, or as a *member* of the European civilisational community. The "tripartition" of Strasbourg suggested partnership only, but in the same speech he also said that he saw no reason why "*some or all of the European nations within the present Soviet Union could not at the same time be members of a European confederation and of some eventual 'post-Soviet' confederation.*"⁴³ Finally at the CSCE Summit in Helsinki in July 1992 he spoke of the need and courage to create a "*system of unity in diversity not only on a pan-European and Atlantic scale but on a Euro-Asian scale as well*",⁴⁴ thus vaguely implying a dichotomy between Europe and North America on the one hand and a post-Soviet "Euro-Asian" community on the other.

Havel also speculated about how to achieve European unity. Here one finds a clear shift from "utopianism" to a "pragmatism" linked to what could be called Havel's "discovery" of the EC. In Strasbourg in May 1990 Havel had spoken of a future confederal Europe with the Council of Europe as its core, and in November 1990, at the CSCE Summit in Paris, he again expressed his support of "President Mitterand's vision" of a pan-European confederation, based on the Council of Europe.⁴⁵ In June 1991 an international conference was even held in Prague on this subject, but although formally giving the idea his warm support, Havel de facto buried it, at least as an alternative to the EC:

⁴¹ Quoted from Havel (1997b), p.41; Czech original in Havel (1990), pp.114-129, quote on p.123.

⁴² Havel (1991b), p.64; see also Havel (1992), p.79.

⁴³ Quoted from Havel (1997b), p.47; Czech original in Havel (1990), pp.114-129, quote on p.128. This might include both the Baltic peoples (probably Havel's main concern) and the Ukrainians or Russians. But a year later in Aachen Havel seemed to distinguish between them when saying that "*no future European order is thinkable without the European nations of the Soviet Union, which are an inseparable part of Europe, and without links to the great community of nations the Soviet Union is becoming today.*" English translation from <<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1991/0905.html>>. Original quotation in Havel (1992), p.79.

⁴⁴ English translation from <<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1992/0907.html>>. Original in Havel (1992), p.194-197; quotation on p.196.

⁴⁵ Havel (1990), p.125, Havel (1992), p.50 f. See also above, p.4.

*"I think that the idea of a pan-European confederation cannot just overlook the existence of the European Community or take this to be something parallel with and unconnected to Europe as a whole, to be some kind of exclusive club in which the others have nothing to do. Instead it must understand the European Community as its driving force, its flag-bearer, as a model for its own future"*⁴⁶.

Havel's first explicit mentioning of the EC came in Strasbourg in May 1990, or rather of the EEC, since the Community was referred to only in an economic context. The EEC was called a "*distant and almost unattainable horizon*", but still the central and eastern European countries should co-ordinate their efforts to get closer, just as the EEC ought to create some "*flexible transitional ground, on which the economies of these states could more easily recover*."⁴⁷ But in November 1990 in Paris Havel said that relations to the EC were very important to Czechoslovak foreign policy and that his country, like Hungary and Poland, would like to become ordinary members in the future, a wish also repeated in his New Year's Address on January 1, 1991.⁴⁸

Speaking to NATO in Brussels in March 1991 Havel expressed his belief that the planned association with the EC would allow his country to take part in the debates about its political union including its security and defence aspects.⁴⁹ From then on he was very explicit about the significance of EC membership, as at the European Confederation conference. In his 1992 New Year's Address he called the Europe Agreement the "*perhaps most important treaty in our post-war history, a treaty which really opens the door to the political and economic environment of democratic Europe*",⁵⁰ and at a dinner for Chancellor Kohl in February 1992 Havel put a date on his membership wish, saying that he hoped that Czechoslovakia would join the EC at the latest by the end of the decade.⁵¹ Within two years the EC had moved from the periphery to the centre of Havel's

⁴⁶ Shromáždění o evropské konfederaci, Praha 12.6.1991; speech printed in Havel (1992), p.86-92, quotations from p.91. See also Dinan (1994), p.477 on Mitterrand's ambitions with the proposal.

⁴⁷ Quoted from Havel (1997b), p.43. The English translation wrongly refers to the EC after the initial "*European Economic Community*", but in Havel's Czech original one only finds the EEC ("EHS"); see Havel (1990), p.126.

⁴⁸ Havel (1992), p.51 f, p.63.

⁴⁹ Rada Ministrů NATO, 21.3.1991; speech printed in Havel (1992), pp.70-76, see especially p.74. Addressing his home audience in *Summer Meditations* in 1991 he said that Czechoslovakia had a very long way to go before obtaining full membership, but he also suggested that the EC might facilitate the process by offering some kind of associate membership. See Havel (1991b), p.66.

⁵⁰ Novoroční projev, 1.1.1992; speech printed in Havel (1992), pp.133-140, quotation from p.137f.

⁵¹ Večeře na počest Helmutha Kohla; speech printed in Havel (1992), p.152-154.

considerations about European unity, and Czechoslovak membership had become a specific wish.

In his speeches Havel was mostly positive, convinced that “good will” would overcome the difficulties that prevented the immediate realisation of his goals. He perceived of these goals in non-conflictual terms as “natural” realisations of a self-evident good. Terminologically, one notices that Havel in the future oriented, optimistic parts of his speeches always referred to “Europe” rather than “the West”. He called his own region “central Europe”⁵² or more frequently “central and eastern Europe”, never “eastern Europe” or “the East”, and placed it next to “democratic western Europe”. In the early speeches “the West” occurred only once, in the Polish *Sejm* where Havel said with a touch of criticism: “*We have awakened, and now we must arouse those in the West who have slept through our awakening.*”⁵³ This was an indication of what was to become a pattern: when Havel had to criticise he turned to the old confrontational terms of “West” and eventually even “East”.⁵⁴

At the conference on European Confederation in 1991 Havel described the problems of the “*post-communist countries*” and their fight to join the “*advanced West*”. He characterised the attitude of this “West” as a highly ambiguous mixture of feelings of co-responsibility and caution, of “*the will to [give] a courageous answer to the surprisingly fast changes in the East [and] a relying upon old stereotypes and a very modest wish to change too fast what has been created for decades and what has proved its worth in the free world.*”⁵⁵ In this speech he also for the first time supplemented his appeals to the good will of “democratic western Europe” with a “horror scenario”:

“I also think that it would be deeply unjust and that it might even have very pernicious consequences for the stability in all of Europe if the emergence of a European confederation would in any way curb the approximation of the new central and eastern European democracies to the European Community. An artificially delayed or hampered economic reform in these countries could easily lead to a great social and

⁵² In the *Sejm* he said that “We have an opportunity to transform Central Europe from what has been a mainly historical and spiritual phenomenon into a political phenomenon”, Havel (1990), p.43. English translation from <http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1990/2501.html>.

⁵³ Quotations from Havel (1990), p.43 and 44; English translation from <http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1990/2501.html>.

⁵⁴ T.G. Ash has discovered a similar “semantic division of labour” in Havel’s pre-1989 writings, Ash (1989), p.183 f. See also Wolff (1994) for a brilliant study of the genesis of a “western” discourse on “eastern Europe”, and Jahn (1990) on the contemporary resistance to the concept in the region.

⁵⁵ Havel (1992), p.88.

political instability, which in the end necessarily would destabilise all of Europe."⁵⁶

At the CSCE Summit in July he again warned "the West" that it would be "in its own interests" to live up to the "historic challenge" of the time: "Confronted with the Eastern dramas, the West seems to be losing the certainty from which it has so far derived its common course. This is understandable: the West and the East are communicating vessels, and whatever happens in one of them inevitably affects the other."⁵⁷

So eventually Havel's discourse of a "natural" new Pan-European order with a harmoniously integrating Czechoslovakia crackled and collided with a reemerging older discourse of confrontation between an "advanced" West and a "problematic" East, in which a certain scepticism towards the intentions of "the West" became more and more visible. As Havel had problems offering *political* (rather than moral) arguments for western European engagement in central and eastern Europe, he also resorted to appeals to a "negative" western self-interest, threatening that a collapsing East would drag the West with it into the abyss.

4.1.3. New Developments 1993-1998

Havel's authority and political weight may have diminished somewhat in his new office as Czech president, especially perhaps in the first years after the division of Czechoslovakia when prime minister Václav Klaus strove very hard to dominate the Czech political scene. The international interest in Havel may also have lessened somewhat as the "novelty" of the post-1989 actors abated, but Havel has remained a prolific commentator of international affairs and a central spokesman for his country. His basic views on Europe and the EU position had been established, but five new aspects of his thinking deserve mentioning.

First, Havel more and more explicitly defined Russia as a "Euro-Asian power" juxtaposed to what was now increasingly called the "Euro-Atlantic" or the "Euro-American" civilisation.⁵⁸ Unlike Huntington (to whose "clash of civilisations" Havel referred in a speech in Vilnius in 1996), Havel believed in the peaceful co-operation of different "*spheres of civilisation*" within a larger global civilisation, but he was still preoccupied with defining civilisational borders, and in particular with avoiding "*the existence of zones of states that are unsure of where they*

⁵⁶ Havel (1992), p.91.

⁵⁷ Havel (1992), p.195; English translation from:

<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1992/0907.html>.

⁵⁸ Havel also uses concepts such as "European civilisation", "the classical European west" or even "Western European" and "Central Asian" spheres of civilisation. See the article "The Co-Responsibility of the West" *Foreign Affairs*, December 22, 1993, printed in Havel (1997b), pp.134-141.

belong”.⁵⁹

Havel’s criteria for placing nations within civilisations were ambiguous. He oscillated between a “subjective” approach to identity, and an “objective” determination based on historical references. Thus he once said that *“everyone should enjoy the inalienable right to say for himself where he sees his deepest roots and where he considers himself to belong in terms of his cultural and historical links, his background and the values he may share with others”*.⁶⁰ And then, for example, in a speech in Kiev, he declared that *“Not only geographically, but also because of its whole past history and the values it now embraces with an ever greater emphasis, Ukraine is a thoroughly European nation.”*⁶¹

When Russia was brought up there was no such oscillation. In Vilnius Havel warned against isolating Russia from Europe; but when he said that *“Russia, for its part, is a huge Euro-Asian power with a great gravitational potential of its own; it has the right to maintain its own identity”*, this was only the right to maintain the “Euro-Asian” identity that Havel had already metered out for it.⁶² The unequivocal message of from Havel’s speeches since 1993 has therefore been the inclusion of America and the exclusion of Russia from “our” civilisation, with all it implied of recommendations for the political organisation of Europe.

Secondly, Havel vehemently rejected the principle of ethnically defined nation states and pointed at European integration as the best way to overcome the

⁵⁹ The full quotation sounds: “World peace is hardly conceivable without good cooperation between the Euro-Atlantic region and this large and influential Euro-Asian entity. Yet, these two entities can cooperate creatively and build a deepening partnership only if both are clearly defined, have distinct boundaries and fully respect each other’s identity. Unclear regional boundaries, or the existence of zones of states that are unsure of where they belong, always lead to trouble.” Mezinárodní konference NATO, Warsaw 21.6.1996, speech printed in Havel (1997a), pp.70-74, quotation from p.73. English translation from: <http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1996/2106.html>.

⁶⁰ Said about Lithuania and its wish to join NATO and repeated in 1997 about Ukraine. Čestný doktorát Vilniuské univerzity 17.4.1996, speech printed in Havel (1997a), pp.40-51, quotation from p.48 f. English translation from: <http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1996/1704.html>.

⁶¹ Taras Shevchenko National University 1.7.1997. Speech found in English translation at <http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1997/0107.html>.

⁶² Havel (1997a), p.50. English translation from: <http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1996/2106.html>. In Kiev, Havel mentions how Ukraine finds itself in the “gravitational fields” of “the Euro-American world” and on the other hand “the Russian Federation, which has always been and will remain a big Euro-Asian power” (reference as in note 61).

dangers of nationalism.⁶³ In his New Year's Address on 1 January 1994 Havel warned against seeing the new Czech state as *"the mere pinnacle of the nation's being"*. He brought up Yugoslavia and juxtaposed a "programmatically national" principle of statehood to one founded on the "civic principle", linking the latter to civil society and European integration. Unification would not, he claimed, bring *"all European nations, ethnic groups, cultures and regions to merge into some amorphous pan-European sea, nor is it to create a kind of monstrous superstate."* Instead, Havel insisted, *"the many different civil societies in the democratic European countries will, together, create the great European civil society. I see no other and no better possibility for us than to accept the spirit of a civic Europe."*⁶⁴ Havel could therefore tell the European Parliament in March 1994 that *"we are able and happy to surrender a portion of our sovereignty in favour of the commonly administered sovereignty of the European Union, because we know it will repay us many times over, as it will all Europeans."*⁶⁵

In the same spirit he insisted on central European co-operation, as when hosting a meeting of the presidents of Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia in Litomyšl in April 1994. Explaining the significance of the meeting to the Czech public (Klaus had notably excused himself from the official dinner), Havel called it proof that central Europe was still alive in the minds of the central Europeans. Also, he said, the presence of the German and Austrian presidents demonstrated that central Europe was an integral part of the Europe *"which is somewhat imprecisely called western Europe or the West"*. He added also that everybody believed in and wanted a *"democratic and truly European Germany."*⁶⁶

Thirdly, Havel combined his critique of nationalism with an extended narrative on European history. Europe was not just a civilisational and cultural entity, he claimed: *"Europe has always been and still is in essence one single and*

⁶³ At the CSCE Summit in Vienna, 8 October 1993 he said: "The greatness of the idea of European integration on democratic foundations consists in its capacity to overcome the old Herderian idea of the nation-state as the highest expression of national life. Thus, European integration should - and must, if it is to succeed - enable all the nationalities to realize their national autonomy within the framework of a broad civil society created by the supranational community." Printed in Havel (1997b), pp.128-133, quotation on p.130.

⁶⁴ Novoroční projev 1.1.1994, printed in Havel (1995), pp.8-17, quotations from p.14 ff. English translation from Havel (1997b), p.150.

⁶⁵ Evropský parlament, speech printed in Havel (1995), pp.54-64, quotation on p.58.

⁶⁶ Litomyšlské znaky, *Lidové noviny* 28.4.1994, printed in Havel (1995), pp.74-81, quotations from p.75 and p.78. Havel also brought up the classical image of central Europe as a bridge, when stating that the sooner the central Europeans cultivated the European values of tolerance and solidarity among themselves, the sooner these ideas could spread further *"to the south and east of Europe"* (p.78).

indivisible political entity, though immensely diverse, multifaceted and intricately structured".⁶⁷ To him, European history was essentially one big attempt to shape this structure and define the relations between its parts. Hitherto, however, the result had mostly been an order built on, and consequently overthrown by force. According to Havel, the driving idea behind the EU was a "*magnanimous attempt*" to give Europe an order based on democracy, peace and co-operation, and now Europe had a historical chance to extend this principle to the whole continent. Havel interpreted all tensions in Europe after 1989 as a struggle between the democratic principle (the *idea* of the EU) and the anti-democratic principle of nationalism and authoritarianism,⁶⁸ and when thanking the European Council in Luxemburg on 13 December 1997 for the invitation to the Czech Republic to join the EU membership talks he repeated this vision of European history calling present developments "*a great victory for the 'European spirit.'*"⁶⁹

Fourthly, Havel was increasingly specific in his evaluation of the EU. Having embedded the EU as a key positive actor in a greater narrative of the European battle between good and evil, he kept measuring actual EU performance in this light. Speaking to the European Parliament in March 1994 he praised the Maastricht Treaty as a great "technical" achievement which however left him with a feeling of want. The EU did have a spirit or an ethos, he was convinced, but it had become invisible behind the technicalities and petty arguments about rules and regulations. To win over people, Havel claimed, the EU must "*impress upon millions of European souls an idea, a historical mission and a momentum. It must clearly articulate the values upon which it is founded and which it intends to defend and cultivate. It also must take care to create emblems and symbols, visible bearers of its significance*".⁷⁰ In short, it must conduct a

⁶⁷ Cena Karla Velikého, Aachen 15.5.1996, speech printed in Havel (1997a), pp.52-61, quotation on p.56, English translation from:
<<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1996/1505.html>>.

⁶⁸ Havel presented this interpretation both at home and abroad, most consistently perhaps in his speech to the European Parliament in March 1994, see Havel (1995), p.54 ff. He repeated it in Aachen in 1996, but with a more explicit warning to the EU about the danger of hesitation: "*unless democrats proceed in a timely manner to build the internal structure of Europe as a single political entity, others will start building it their way - and the democrats could be left with only their eyes to cry with. The demons that so fatally affected European history - most disastrously in the twentieth century! - are biding their time.*" (See note 69, quotation from p.57). Havel's ideas seem very much inspired by the first Czechoslovak president T.G.Masaryk's interpretation of world history as a struggle between the principle of "democracy" and that of "theocracy" or authoritarianism, culminating in the First World War and the following creation of democratic nation-states in east central Europe.

⁶⁹ Speech found in English translation at:
<<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1997/1312.html>>.

⁷⁰ Havel (1995), p.62. English translation from:

conscious, active “identity politics” similar to nation building. Havel also asked from the EU a clear commitment to enlargement, including a specific timetable for all of Europe not yet included.⁷¹

Presented like this, obligations are stronger on the EU than on the applicant side in the sense that enlargement is justified by history and culture as such, by Europe’s civilisational unity, *before* any specific political or economic criteria enter the game (to be precise, these criteria are not seen as irrelevant or unjust, only as secondary). Therefore, especially in an international context, Havel paid relatively little attention to what the Czechs had to do or live up to.⁷²

Finally, Havel’s scepticism towards western Europe did not disappear. The threat to Europe came not only from nationalists, but also from “*the weakness and indifference on the part of the democrats*”⁷³, he said in Holland in 1995, and the following year he told the Czech Parliament that “*the danger of ‘Munich-ism’ is taking wings again over Europe.*”⁷⁴ Havel kept warning that it would be naïve

<<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1994/0803.html>>. Ironically, the EC had especially since the mid-1980’s invested a lot in this kind of “identity politics”, complete with flag, hymn and history books, with very poor results. See Boxhoorn (1996) and Smith (1992).

⁷¹ He did acknowledge in Strasbourg 1994 that “*It is clear that new members, particularly those attempting to shed the consequences of Communist rule, cannot be accepted overnight into the European Union without seriously threatening to tear the delicate threads from which it is woven*” Havel (1995), p.59. English translation from:

<<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1994/0803.html>>. See also Havel’s speech in Aachen, Havel (1997a), especially p.57.

⁷² Addressing his own nation, Havel has at times stressed also the Czech obligation to prepare for membership of the EU legally and economically and not the least by “cultivating Europeanness”. See his New Year’s Address 1 January 1995, printed in Havel (1995), pp.192-204, especially p.202. In his big speech to the Parliament on 9 December 1997 - during the government crisis that led to the resignation of Klaus - Havel criticised the “pride, provincialism and parochialism” that had led his government to disrupt the Visegrád co-operation and neglect the task of explaining to the citizens the historic importance of membership of the EU and NATO. Preparation was thus again interpreted mostly in moral and educational terms, whereas the long parts of the speech dealing with the necessity of reforms in the economy, the legal sphere, public administration, self-government, etc., does not relate the wished-for policy reforms to the question of living up to EU requirements. English translation of the speech from:

<<http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1997/0912.html>>.

⁷³ The 1995 Geuzenpenning, Vlaardingen, 13.3.1995, speech printed in Havel (1997b), pp.188-192, quotation from p.191.

⁷⁴ “*...mnichovanské nebezpečí se opět nad Evropou vznáší.*” Speech printed in Havel (1997a), pp.26-39, quotation from p.38. The reference is to the appeasement politics of the Munich conference in September 1938 where Britain and France for fear of a confrontation with Germany “betrayed” Czechoslovakia.

and detrimental to:

*"believe that one half of Europe will blossom, will be able to protect itself from different dangers and cooperate along democratic principles and that the other half of Europe will forever find itself in some indeterminate vacuum... It is now six years ago that the Iron Curtain fell. I feel that relatively little has happened in these years. And time is working against the democrats."*⁷⁵

Behind the strong words, however, Havel's warnings and frustrations can be seen as indications of the *weakness* of the Czech position vis-à-vis the EU and of Havel's difficulties with constructing a narrative capable of convincing first of all western European decision-makers about the necessity of enlargement.

4.2. The Government and the Prime Minister

The government has the main responsibility not only for the daily conduct of the country's foreign affairs, but also for determining its foreign policy priorities. Government statements and articles and speeches by leading ministers thus all create a narrative framework that can make these policies meaningful to the Czech population and to the surrounding world. This narrative will be studied here primarily in Klaus's rendering, with a special attention to how it corresponds to that of Havel, and to how it reflected the government change of policy in 1995-1996.

4.2.1. The Foreign Policy Statement of April 1993

In the first years after the split of Czechoslovakia the government approach to foreign politics may be characterised as solitary and self-conscious. This is already apparent in the first major official foreign policy statement from April 1993 when Josef Zieleniec presented the government's concept of a new Czech foreign policy to the parliament.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Projev na slavnostním zahájení kongresu Nové atlantické iniciativy 10.5.1996, printed in *Střední Evropa* 61/1996., pp.77-80, quotation on p.79.

⁷⁶ The policy statement of the Czech government from 13 July 1992 contains only four short paragraphs on foreign politics, primarily because this still fell within the competence of the Federal government. The wish to strengthen relations to the EC was mentioned briefly in the third paragraph, and most attention was given to the protection of national interests from the demands of Sudetengerman organisations. Text from <<http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/win/eknih/1992cnr/stenprot/002schuz/s002002.htm>>.

As its starting point the government took a very positive view on the implications of the division of Czechoslovakia. Geopolitically, it claimed, the Czech Republic had emancipated itself from the part of the Danube area that bordered at *"the unstable zones of eastern and south-eastern Europe"*. This would gain importance as the Czech Republic became a part of the *"zone of stability in western Europe"* to which the country was *"predetermined by its history, geographical location, tradition of political democracy and effort to create a civic state under the rule of law, respecting human rights"*,⁷⁷ i.e. by both history and by its own present and future efforts.

The goal of Czech foreign politics was to secure the stability, security and economic prosperity of the country and its position *"in the family of European democratic countries"*. To obtain this, the Czech Republic had to create good relations to its neighbours and to work on the gradual integration of the country into the *"main European economic, political and defence organisations"*, and finally to *"follow events in eastern and south-eastern Europe and maintain contacts with the countries of the post-communist world"*.⁷⁸ This ranking of neighbours before international organisations was followed by an account of bilateral and multilateral priorities with a clear emphasis on the former. And when turning to multilateral priorities Zieleniec started with the significance of integrating into the world economy (including institutions such as the EC, the IMF, the World Bank, the EBRD, OECD and GATT) before specifying priorities vis-à-vis the EC.

EC membership was defined as a *"long term goal and a clear priority"*, and to prepare for a *"fast and smooth"* accession the Czech Republic would have to harmonise its legislation and create a free-trade zone. Integration was, the government acknowledged, first of all a domestic challenge, but:

"on the other hand, the fall of the Iron Curtain is not a challenge only to us. Also the nations of western Europe have gradually to get used to the thought that we will one day live together. The European Community, to a large extent a product of the former bipolar world, must find its new place in the new world, must find its new vision. An effort to adapt the economy must be exerted on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. It is obvious that even the economy of the countries of the European

⁷⁷ Zieleniec, Josef: Ke koncepci zahraniční politiky České republiky, 21.4.1993, printed in Kotyk (1997), pp.243-250, quotations from p.243 (=Zieleniec 1993).

⁷⁸ Zieleniec (1993), p.244. The emphasis on the distance to these countries is obvious and the sentence almost suggests that the Czech Republic is not a "country of the post-communist world".

Community as a consequence of the integration of our countries must undergo a process of restructuring, which is also not going to be painless”⁷⁹.

In 1993 the government thus felt confident enough to tell the EC how to behave and what to expect while taking its willingness to enlarge for granted. Furthermore, it presented enlargement as basically making equal demands on equal partners, rather than as a adaptation of Czech standards to a given EC/EU norm.

4.2.2. Václav Klaus 1993-1995

In this period Václav Klaus further developed a self-confident discourse. In addition to political speeches at home and abroad Klaus also regularly wrote small essays to the daily newspaper *Lidové noviny*. From these statements four main themes may be identified: his vision of Europe, his vision of the Czech nation, his interpretation of the EC/EU and finally his view on their mutual relationship.

Klaus' basic premise is the observation that *“Europe can never be enlarged (or narrowed) by anybody. Europe is Europe no matter which institutions emerge in it”* and that *“the Czech lands have always been a part of Europe”*.⁸⁰ Terminologically Klaus keeps to “Europe”, avoiding Havel’s “Euro-American civilisation” and using “the West” only rarely (and then with “western Europe” as a sub-category). Speaking to the Council of Europe in 1995 he said that he believed in Europe as *“more than the sum of its parts”* and as *“a very real thing”*, even without the *“tangible institutions”* that “some” (a hint at Euro-federalists) preferred to build in order to make Europe visible.⁸¹ “Europe” generally appeared in Klaus’s speeches as a given entity and, unlike Havel, he devoted relatively little energy to defining its substance⁸² or its borders.⁸³

⁷⁹ Zieleniec (1993), p.249. One notices that in this somewhat confrontational context, the Czech Republic is *not* placed among the “nations of western Europe”. Havel’s speeches contained a similar ambiguity in the use of the “western” predicate.

⁸⁰ *Evropa v perspektivě setkání v Davosu*, *Lidové noviny* 7.2.1994, printed in Klaus (1994), pp.166-168, quotations from p.166 and 167.

⁸¹ *Evropa, naše vize a naše strategie*, Strasbourg 30.1.1995, printed in Klaus (1995), pp.141-145, quotations from p.144 and 145.

⁸² Speaking in Bavaria in 1993 he once referred to *“western Christendom, which - together with eastern Christendom - became the foundation stone of European civilisation”* (Změny v Praze a evropské souvislosti, 22.3.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), pp.131-137, quotation from p.131) and in his speech in Strasbourg (see note 84) he listed *“the natural attraction of Europe for most Europeans; a similar culture and history; common interests; geographical proximity”*

There is, however, one substantial terminological ambiguity in Klaus's writings. Most of the time Klaus stuck to the notion of "one Europe", and he spoke with sarcasm about a "*western Europe that likes to call itself Europe*" which often reminded him of a hotel room with a "Do not disturb" sign on the door⁸⁴. But when he said in Bavaria in 1993 that "*if we want to live in European contexts we must, after forty years of separation, Europeanise ourselves internally and also in our foreign politics*",⁸⁵ he clearly referred to "European" and "Europeanise" as western European norms for economic and political life.

When Klaus mentions the Czech wish to become part of "*advanced Europe*", he does recognise the difference between a western and an eastern Europe (a concept he is less afraid of than Havel).⁸⁶ When he writes that "*Europe should strive to contribute to the integration and inner stability of the countries of the former eastern bloc*",⁸⁷ "Europe" as an acting subject can hardly mean anything but western Europe or the EU. Similarly, his declaration that "*In... [four years since 1989] we have resisted the recommendation of some of our western friends to form in central and eastern Europe some special, sub-regional institution, because this would only separate us from Europe, not unite us with it*"⁸⁸ makes no sense by Klaus's own definition of Europe, while it is perfectly logical if "Europe" means the EU.

as starting points for European integration (*op.cit.* p.145).

⁸³ Perhaps also because he hardly ever mentioned countries to the east of his own. In a single reference to Russia he places the country outside Europe, although more, it seems, for political than for historical or cultural reasons: "*Europe and the world should not close themselves before [Russia], they should not isolate it, although they on no account must offer it membership of such exclusive 'clubs' as NATO or the European Union. Ten years is too little to realise a consistent transformation of such a country.*" Deset let "perestrojky", *Lidové noviny* 6.3.1995, p.5.

⁸⁴ V předvečer kodánské schůzky, *Lidové noviny* 14.3.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), p.147-148.

⁸⁵ Klaus (1994), p.132

⁸⁶ Klaus (1994), p.153. Sometimes Klaus uses the official, "politically correct" *central and eastern Europe*, but just as often he has the "traditional" *eastern Europe* in which he doesn't hesitate to include his own country; see for instance Klaus (1994), p.136, where both concepts are used.

⁸⁷ Klaus (1994), p.137.

⁸⁸ Česka republika a její integrace do evropských politických, bezpečnostních a ekonomických struktur, speech in Prague, printed in Klaus (1995), p.121-123, quotation from p.123. German version, Die Tschechische Republik und die Integration Europas in *Europäische Rundschau* 3/94, pp.3-5. Klaus here explicitly rejects the idea of Visegrád co-operation and even the term itself. See also the article Středoevropské iniciativy, *Lidové noviny* 9.5.1994, printed in Klaus (1995), pp.128-129, in which Klaus gives his account of what "central-europeanness" means to him, and of why he didn't go to the Litomyšl meeting (see above p.19).

Like Havel, Klaus has a model for the interpretation of European history. His starting point is the characterisation of Europe as an entity “*based on a distinct heterogeneity which creates a very fragile balance*”.⁸⁹ Whereas in Havel’s vision a dynamism arose from the struggle between the organising principles of force or co-operation, authoritarianism or democracy, nationalism or civil society, Klaus found the motor of development in the tension between “*unifying, pan-European tendencies on the one hand and individualising, more national strivings on the other*”. This conflict or strife, he claimed, “*is as old as Europe itself*” and it would be naïve to think that it could be overcome in the 1990’s. Quoting Masaryk, he described it as a task for Europe to create harmony between these centralising and autonomising forces.⁹⁰ While insisting that “*Europe in its very substance is a ‘multi-speed’ continent*” and that both division or fragmentation and forced unification (as with Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin) were bad for Europe⁹¹, most of his warnings were directed against unification. A European Union based on unification was either a utopian dream or, in its “*Napoleonic version*”, a great power attempt at European hegemony⁹², he claimed. When introducing the tension between unifying and individualising principles, he continued the list with oppositions of protectionism and free market, statism and liberalism, dogma and common sense, lies and truth, while making it very clear that the adherents of a “*pan-European government, pan-European currency, pan-European standard for the shape and size of bottles of beer or wine, a common European citizenship, a common European social legislation and such things*”⁹³ belonged on the side of the former.

Klaus’s negative view of European unification was closely related to his view of the nation. Klaus persisted that a “*national feeling*” was legitimate, that “*the whole idea of Europe should not be based on a too simplistic rejection of patriotism and national feeling*”, and that attempts to base European integration

⁸⁹ Klaus (1995), p.141.

⁹⁰ Evropské zadrhele a maso, *Lidové noviny* 19.4.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), pp.53-54, quotations and reference to Masaryk on p.53. It is worth noticing that both Havel (see note 70) and Klaus go back to Masaryk to bolster or legitimise their argument. Although they reach very different conclusions, their claims to Masaryk are in a certain sense justified, since they focus on two different and not always fully compatible sides of his philosophy of European history (see Bugge 1997).

⁹¹ Vicerychlostní Evropa, *Lidové noviny* 19.9.1994, printed in Klaus (1995), pp.136-138, quotation from p.136.

⁹² Prekročili jsme Rubikon, speech in Felfading, Germany 3.12.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), pp.162-165, quotations on p.165. Here he also said that “*Europe when it was not fatally divided, always formed a unity in diversity*”.

⁹³ Klaus (1994), p.53 f. Accordingly, he warned against making Europe stronger or bigger only to be able to compete with the USA or with Japan, since “*we don’t believe in size*”. Klaus (1995), p.142. See also Klaus (1994), p.136.

on a "European feeling" superior to national identity would turn out to be an artificial, bureaucratic super-nationalism imposed from above⁹⁴: "*it is already clear now that different Europeans will not seek their identity in a Europe totally without borders, but on the contrary with the help of them. It is borders or clear demarcations that give us a clear identity.*"⁹⁵

To Klaus, the natural unit for self-determination is the sovereign nation state.⁹⁶ Klaus is full of praise for the British conservatives, whom he calls "*constructive euro-realists*", with whom the Czechs are "*in the same boat*", and he joins John Major in saying that the EC must remain a union of sovereign nation states⁹⁷. Klaus is convinced that the overwhelming majority of Europeans will accept European integration only if the nation state remains the primary unit and the European supra-national institutions secondary. The debate about integration can then focus on what and how much to transfer to the supra-national level, but not on the hierarchy of institutions as such⁹⁸. In the same vein Klaus strongly rejects regionalism as simply the flip side of European unification or federalisation. He quotes Margaret Thatcher for saying that "*you cannot cantonize the world*", and calls plans for central European regionalism utopian projects designed to challenge the existing nation states. He also attacks the thought that Europe and its regions are "natural units", and the creation of nation states two hundred years ago a mere "historical blunder".⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Česká republika a myšlenka evropské integrace, speech in Prague 21.12.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), pp.149-154, see especially p.150. See further Klaus (1995), p.123 (for the quotation), and Klaus (1995), p.145.

⁹⁵ Nerozpustit se v evropeismu, speech in Frankfurt 18.1.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), pp.138-140, quotation on p.139 f. It is interesting to compare with Havel who, though adherent of a Europe where borders lose their importance, are equally eager to define such borders or demarcations, only *around* Europe rather than *within* it. See above p.19.

⁹⁶ In *Lidové noviny* Klaus wrote on 17 February 1996: "*It is our duty to give our country to our children at least in the shape in which we got it from our parents. Not a single square metre smaller, not a bit less sovereign. And no negative change in this direction may follow from the present Czech-German discussions, nor from today's at times somewhat simplified pan-European unionist plans.*" ("Podivná demagogická aktivita ČSSD"). It was said in the heat of the moment, when the Klaus government was exposed to populist attacks from the Social Democrats and others of selling out of Czech national interests to the Germans, but if the statement on sovereignty is taken literally, Klaus here comes close to contradicting the official policy of his own government, as well as the obligations accepted by it with the signing of the "Europe agreement" with the EU.

⁹⁷ John Major o Evropě, *Lidové noviny*, 26.9.1993, printed in Klaus (1994), p.143-144.

⁹⁸ Klaus (1995), p.136. Klaus here uses the phrase "*the European states (states who are mostly national)*", which suggest an "ethnic" rather than a "civic" or "political" definition of the nation state.

⁹⁹ Jarní Anglie, *Lidové noviny*, 21.3.1994, printed in Klaus (1995), pp.124-125, quotation on p.125. See also Klaus (1994), p.132 and Klaus (1995), p.147.

All this allowed Klaus to identify the central political challenge for the Czechs in their relationship to Europe/the EU as follows: *"The Czech Republic is facing one important task: how to be European without at the same time dissolving in Europeanness like a lump of sugar in a cup of coffee"*¹⁰⁰ or, with a metaphor that nicely spells out the "fatal attraction" of (western) Europe to the Czech eye: *"[we] stand before a double task: to find our own identity and not to lose it again immediately on our way to Europe."*¹⁰¹ This, he continues, is the reason why the Czechs prefer the integration of European states and nations before unification or federalism.

This crucial statement reveals a basic uncertainty and defensiveness about the Czech position, visible also in Havel's reasoning. Perhaps this uncertainty may explain Klaus's urge to present his own vision of how to organise Europe, and why he tries to bolster the Czech self-assurance by stressing (like Havel in his dissident years) that the Czechs, and other former communist nations, have a special sensitivity towards phenomena such as centralisation and the bureaucratic repression of difference, which present a real danger to Europe.¹⁰² Klaus's perception of the EC/EU is of course deeply affected by his economic philosophy, his interpretation of European history and his belief in the irreplaceable role of the nation state. He has, however, two rather conflicting interpretations of EC/EU history that share only their rejection of Maastricht Treaty EU.

In his first account, he portrays the present version of European integration as founded on ideological paradigms from the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, characterised by a distrust of a spontaneously working free market and a belief in size, unification, planning and state intervention. These paradigms (which also took the division of Europe for granted) gave birth to the Maastricht project, which however in Klaus's opinion increasingly appears as outdated, both practically - it is seen as a main cause of western Europe's economic problems and of its protectionist stance vis-à-vis eastern Europe - and theoretically, since the new, liberalist paradigms of the 1980's (which Klaus embrace) are beginning to assert themselves in politics. Therefore, Klaus predicts, the EU will change towards deregulation and economic openness, towards *"a belief in the market and not in the state"*.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Klaus (1994), p.136. Klaus has defined Czech "Europeanism" ("evropanismus") as the *"duty to guard and protect our own identity, traditions and habits, because we believe that this is precisely what we can offer each of you in Europe"*. Klaus (1995), p.141.

¹⁰¹ Klaus (1994), p.153 and with nearly identical words in Klaus (1995), p.122. In both cases italicized in the original. Klaus here calls this a task for all post-communist countries.

¹⁰² Klaus (1994), p.154 and 168.

¹⁰³ Klaus (1994), p.151; see also p.135, p.139 and p.164, and Klaus (1995), p.122. In an

In this “optimistic” scenario, Maastricht is the swan song of an old EC philosophy. But Klaus also has a different version, which evaluates the “original vision” of the EC far more positively, while seeing the Maastricht Treaty as the first omen of something new and threatening:

“The original vision started from the necessity to prevent a repetition of the Second World War, to integrate Germany into Europe in a new fashion, to support the values of freedom and democracy against communist ideology, to support the growth in wealth by removing barriers to trade and creating a common market.”

This vision, which according to Klaus had the support of most citizens of Europe, is however:

“in all silence being replaced by a far more comprehensive vision, consisting in Europeanism, in the effort to create a new European identity, in a greater co-ordination from the centre, in the attuning of economic policies, in joint programmes in many areas, in a belief in extensive regulation, in the diminishing of the authority and responsibility of the nations or states.”¹⁰⁴

This contradiction may be explained as a wavering between hopes and fears about future EU developments, but it also reveals an ambiguity in Klaus’s perception of the value of the EU. In the second version he clearly recognises the *political* value of the EC/EU project, while elsewhere he seems to deny it any value at all: *“the success of western Europe depended not on the institutions of the European Community, but on a free society, private ownership and a free market”*.¹⁰⁵ Klaus insists that the European institutions are only means, not goals in their own right, and that as such they make sense only if they support free trade and a free market.¹⁰⁶

One may wonder why at all Klaus wants his country to become member of the EU, since he is so critical of its present shape. His answer is held in very general

interview from January 1996 Klaus even brings up the theory that a change of generations in the EU bureaucracy will pave the way for the “intellectual revolution” of the 1980s: *“There will no longer be the civil servants of which a significant part founded the EEC in the fifties and still sit there since these days”*, Žití na hraně je těžké - rozhovor Ekonomu, Ekonom 1/1996, pp.11-13, quotation from p.12.

¹⁰⁴ Klaus (1995), p.144

¹⁰⁵ Klaus (1994), p.166. Elsewhere, he is equally categorical as when claiming that *“the success of us in Europe, not of Europe itself, depends on the quality and structure of the general political, social and economic system that functions here, and not on the existence, extent of operation and activities of multilateral European institutions”*, Klaus (1995), p.122.

¹⁰⁶ Klaus (1995), p.143, Klaus (1994), p.167

terms that “we do not want to miss the advantages that come from the membership of European institutions[and] we share the European values of our western neighbours” and that therefore the Czechs want to “join a reasonable European integration”.¹⁰⁷ Klaus did not spell out the advantages or the values very clearly, except that “reasonable” obviously referred to an international co-operation based on economic liberalism. It was this reduction of “the idea of the EC/EU” to free trade and open markets that allowed Klaus to declare his country ready before the EU would be¹⁰⁸, and to demand from the EU not just “a realistic time schedule for important integration steps, but first of all a permanent, non-aprioristic search for the nature of this integration itself”.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, Klaus was much in favour of a “multi-speed” Europe since it meant giving up the ambition to create one binding model for all and thus facilitated Czech integration into the EU. “Widening” rather than “deepening” was his priority, since, as he put it, it was easier to get on a slow train than on an express train. Thus his resistance to the Maastricht Treaty seems based also on a fear that the concentration on “internal affairs” might make the EU forget eastern Europe¹¹⁰. Like Havel, however, Klaus had difficulties bringing concrete arguments for why the EU should enlarge (although unlike Havel he was reluctant to bring threats), and he too resorts to moralistic appeals to the “Europeanness” of western Europe and to everybody’s responsibility to “heal the un-organic wound between the West and the East of this continent”.¹¹¹

4.2.3. Government Attitudes since the Application for Membership

Against this background of praise for the sovereign nation state and scepticism of the EU, the official Memorandum that accompanied the Government’s application for membership of the EU in January 1996 reads not just like a

¹⁰⁷ Klaus (1995), p.121, emphasis added in the second quotation. See also Klaus (1994), p.167.

¹⁰⁸ “We want to become a part of advanced Europe and I am convinced, that we have the basic preconditions for it, probably better than anybody else” Klaus (1994), p.153. See also above p.5.

¹⁰⁹ Klaus (1994), p.154. Or elsewhere: “The idea that the post-communist countries will gradually “europeanise” and the promise that they will gradually be integrated into an unchanged western Europe is insufficient and basically wrong”. Klaus (1994), p.165

¹¹⁰ As he put it here “a deepening of the European Union without us is not and cannot be a victory for us” Klaus (1995), p.138. Klaus is very morally upset about the Maastricht Treaty’s attempt to give full emphasis to deepening at the same time as the collapse of communism gave all of Europe a historic challenge and a historic chance. Therefore, he claims, after a period of awareness of their own weakness and of their bad conscience, the post-communist countries are fully entitled to criticise the protectionism and lack of openness in the West. Klaus (1994), p.148.

¹¹¹ Klaus (1994), p.137.

change of attitude, but almost like a confession.¹¹² The Memorandum contains an unequivocal acceptance of the EU in all its aspects, an explanation of why the Czech Republic wants to become a member and why it feels ready for such a step and, in the “confession” part, an account of the difficulties the government went through before coming to accept the EU.

As to acceptance, there is no trace of Klaus’s reservations in the statement that “*the Czech Republic accepts for its future membership the European Union such as it is and such as it will be shaped by the collective wisdom of its Member States in the months and years to come*”, nor in the proclamation (after some words of praise for the inner market and the EMU) that “*the Czech Government at the same time accepts the broader, non-economic aspects of European integration*”.¹¹³ The Memorandum is very frank about the difficulties of the government in overcoming its mistrust towards the “*complicated and at times not sufficiently transparent mechanism of the EU*”,¹¹⁴ and in getting used to the perspective of giving up part of the country’s sovereignty.

The application for membership is described as “*a step of unparalleled importance in the modern history of the country*” that puts a great responsibility on the government, both toward its own citizens and toward all of Europe (the point that the government also wishes to join the EU for Europe’s sake is made twice in the document). The government has, however, come to the conviction

¹¹² Memorandum k přihlášce, *Lidové noviny* 20.10.1995, p.3. The basic draft was prepared in the Government Committee for European Integration and according to Klaus addressed both to a domestic and to a foreign audience. Klaus stressed that there was no “artificial division” between Euro-sceptics and Euro-optimists among the seven present ministers, in stark contrast to the general impression of the situation within the government, see Had et al. (1997), p.52.

¹¹³ Memorandum (1996). English translation from the home-page of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.czech.cz/english/132_eu.htm>. Interestingly, the English version is somewhat shorter than the Czech one. For example: Both versions have the sentence that “*the Government of the Czech Republic is aware of the usefulness and irreversibility of the process of European integration*”, but in the English version the latter half of the sentence “*and its unique actual expression in the concept of institutions of the European Union*” is omitted. The domestic public is thus offered an even stronger praise of the EU than the foreign readership. In the following, the English translation will be used when the texts correspond, and information given when they do not.

¹¹⁴ The English rendering of the paragraph, from which the quotation is taken, is shorter than the Czech original and reads: “*It has not been easy to define the principles and the mechanisms of the European Union. It has not been easy to overcome the notion of mistrust in the face of such a complicated entity as the European Union.*” In this case, the description and the critique of the complexity of the EU institutions in the Czech text has been subdued in the English version.

that this responsibility “allows for no other alternatives”¹¹⁵, which we may both read fatalistically - as a recognition of the untenability of Klaus’s position so far - and as an attempt to ward off any debate about the government’s decision. As Judy Batt has put it in a critique of Klaus’s arguments for his economic policies: “If there is no alternative, however, there is no room for politics, which is all about free choice between competing alternatives.”¹¹⁶ Klaus has had difficulties in recognising this aspect of political life, both “theoretically”¹¹⁷ and in actual practice. According to the Memorandum the Czech government enjoys “broad support from the majority of citizens and from the determining political forces in the country”.¹¹⁸ But the government totally abstained from consulting these political forces in the Czech parliament before submitting the application and the Memorandum to the EU.¹¹⁹

In the “historical” part of the text one finds the now familiar claims about the Czech Lands being, with the involuntary exception of the last decades, “a natural and conspicuous part of the western European civilisational space”, a space that promotes “identical civilisational and cultural values” and that to a great extent is “identical with the space of today’s EU”.¹²⁰ It also stresses that “Czech national identity was for most of its history part of multicultural entities”, which is said to increase the Czech understanding of the implications of European integration, while “dark periods with the baneful consequences of disintegration and national egoism”¹²¹ are described as the negative side of this heritage. This is closer to Havel than to Klaus’s praise of the nation state. Finally, the Memo-

¹¹⁵ Or, in the English translation, “makes this decision imperative”.

¹¹⁶ Batt (1994), p.40. Notice also the passage in the Memorandum that “the Government of the Czech Republic has irrevocably arrived at the conclusion that within the context of modern European developments the exchange of a part of its national sovereignty for a shared supra-national sovereignty and co-responsibility is an inevitable step to be taken for the benefit of its own country and the whole of Europe” (emphasis added twice).

¹¹⁷ See Martinsen (1995) for a fine analysis of the “anti-political” ideology of Václav Klaus.

¹¹⁸ This paragraph is omitted in the English version.

¹¹⁹ When blamed in Parliament by the Communist deputy Václav Exner for not presenting the question to the Parliament and allowing for a discussion there, Klaus bluntly dismissed the critique claiming first, with a distortion of Exner’s argument, that nowhere in Europe had there been a referendum about the application for membership, and secondly that “there would be plenty of time for us in this country to calmly discuss, in which form the consent of the citizens to the entry into the EU can be realised” (sic!). 39. Schůze Poslanecké sněmovny, 6.-21.3.1996, Bod XXXVIII: Ústní interpelace poslanců na členy vlády, quoted from the homepage of the Czech Parliament:

<<http://www.psp.cz/ekhil/1993ps/stenprot/039schuz/s039022.htm>>.

¹²⁰ This passage is omitted in the English version. The privileged position granted to Western Europe is remarkable.

¹²¹ This part is again omitted in the English version.

randum stresses the good Czech results in preparing for membership “both within and beyond the framework of the Europe Agreement” and its conviction that the EU will soon be ready to respond positively to the Czech application.

In sum, the Memorandum reads like a fundamental revisal of many of Klaus’s viewpoints. It might suggest that Klaus had come to the conclusion that his old attitudes had been counterproductive, and that there - if membership were to remain a priority of Czech foreign policy - was “no alternative” to a change of style. But the swing may also very well stem from a difference of perception within the government, with “dissenting” voices eventually getting the upper hand.¹²²

In interviews and articles in 1995 Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec presented an interpretation of the EU that clearly different from the one of Klaus. Zieleniec praised the political dimension of the EC/EU co-operation, especially its importance for the preservation of peace and prevention of “national wars” in Europe, which, he claimed, was also of paramount importance to the Czech Republic. Therefore Zieleniec saw “no alternative” to its “European fate”. Similarly, he warned against letting economic calculations of wins and losses for different social groups or the response to the European social legislation determine the general attitude to Czech membership.¹²³

Although stressing the global rather than the particular aspects of the Czech desire for membership, Zieleniec also made some more specific observations about Czech interests and positions towards the EU. Discussing the future shape of EU institutions he claimed that the Czechs after over forty years of uncontrolled bureaucratic rule put great emphasis on a balance between the executive and the legislative. In EU terms he “translated” this not to a call for increased powers of the European Parliament, but to an emphasis on the importance of the member states and their parliaments for the control of the EU bureaucracy.¹²⁴ He noticed that the Czech EU debate was only beginning and

¹²² According to Jiří Pehe, Czech foreign policy in these years had three pronounced sources, the President, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose approach the EU and on Czech-German matters differed from that of Klaus, see Pehe (1998), p.63

¹²³ Černý, Adam & Jungrová, Terezie: *Minulost není těžištěm našich vztahů s Německem*, interview with Josef Zieleniec, *Lidové noviny* 24.2.1995, p.8 (Zieleniec 1995a)

¹²⁴ When asked if he agreed with Milan Uhde, Chairman of the Czech Parliament and like Zieleniec a leading member of the ODS (Civic Democratic Party), that the unification of Europe conducted by a supra-national bureaucracy would be a danger to the Czechs, Zieleniec replied that this was not a relevant way to put the question. A “United States of Europe” was clearly a utopian idea, and Zieleniec was convinced that the EU was aiming towards a Europe of nations, not towards a single European nation. But, he repeated, these nations would have to co-operate as intensively as possible to avoid national antagonisms and war (Zieleniec

mentioned two government strategies for preparing the population for EU membership. One was to liberalise trade so that the Czech market could adjust to the pressure of international competition, and the other was to avoid subsidising various interest groups who could then later feel tempted to refuse EU membership for fear of losing privileges with the entry into the Union. Government information campaigns were not mentioned.¹²⁵

In January 1996 Zieleniec explained why the government was about to apply for membership and why it had chosen to accompany the application with a Memorandum. The Madrid summit, he said, offered a concrete perspective for membership, and the government had to give a serious response to this historical event. The integration of the Czech Republic into the EU depended mostly on domestic political and economic changes, he pointed out, but he also assured that EU politicians were aware that *"without us the European Union is a torso, not the Europe that could face the challenges of the 21. Century"*. Though quoting from the "historical" part of the Memorandum, Zieleniec stressed that daily needs called for Czech membership as well. EU decisions affected the Czech Republic at all levels, especially economically, and therefore the country had to take part in its decision-making at all levels. Zieleniec was frank about the asymmetry in Czech-EU relations and about the constraints it put on Czech decision-making, but he also pointed to the stabilising effect of membership, calling it definite proof that the changes since 1989 were irreversible.¹²⁶

This more humble attitude came to characterise government statements after 1996. In the parliamentary debate about the application in February 1996 Klaus proclaimed: *"we must say that we enter this organisation such as it is. I think that none of us takes it seriously that we could hand in an application and trumpet forth in advance that we take half of it and not the other half, I think that everybody knows well that such a thing does not come into consideration"*.¹²⁷ This is of course a far cry from what he stated around 1993.

1995b).

¹²⁵ Zieleniec (1995a). Zieleniec also insists that there were no problems of co-ordination in Czech foreign policy, nor any disagreement between the President and the Government. Finally, Zieleniec stressed the achievement and importance of having had a democratic Germany integrated into a democratic, co-operating (western) Europe. Talking about economics he said that a monetary union or common European currency should not cause Czech resistance, since the Czech "koruna" was already strictly tied to a basket of western European currencies.

¹²⁶ Zieleniec, Josef: Česká republika podává přihlášku, *Lidové noviny* 10.1.1996, p.8.

¹²⁷ Klaus also refused to tell if he considered the EU to be democratic or what he thought about the role of the European Parliament, calling such discussions "premature". He strongly warned against imposing conditions on the EU, calling it a *"senseless, vain attempt"* that would bring no good. In the same debate Zieleniec assured the Parliament that the Czech

Presenting the policy statement of his new cabinet to the Czech Parliament in July 1996, Klaus declared that Czech priorities were unchanged, in smooth continuation of the policy of the previous government. Now, however, he listed the fastest possible membership of the EU and NATO first as the main priority of the government, since the "*Czech Republic historically, politically, culturally and economically belongs to the Euro-Atlantic civilisational process*". Therefore, the government would speed up preparations for membership to be ready to initiate negotiations in 1998. It promised to negotiate the criteria for accession into the EU "*responsibly*", but it was ready to "*accept the main principles of the European integration in the shape that it will have at that time*". Finally, it promised that it would inform the public "*in suitable ways*" about the extent and character of the rights and obligations stemming from membership of the EU and NATO.¹²⁸

Talking to the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Parliament in September 1996 Zieleniec too stressed the continuity of Czech foreign policy since 1993. Again, and unlike in 1993, integration into the main "*European and trans-Atlantic political, economic and security structures*" was listed first, before relations to neighbours, other bilateral relations and world trade and economy. With regard to the EU, Zieleniec stressed the importance of the Europe Agreement, the Czech application for membership and the Memorandum, as well as the practical steps taken by both the EU and the government to prepare for membership negotiations.¹²⁹

Klaus himself seems to have adjusted his rhetoric to the realities of the Czech position and to have become more focussed in his critique, rather than to have radically changed opinions. Writing in *Lidové noviny* in January 1996 he mentioned how at a conference in Bonn he had met "Eurocrats" speaking "a special European newspeak" to the irritation of most. At the conference he had called for a more open and precise discussion of *why* Europe needed reform. He

policy toward the EU was based on national interests and that there would be plenty of room to discuss the pros and cons of the Union in due time, calling the project "*frail and of course not always perfect*". But he also stressed again the overriding importance of the EU's political aspect of securing peace and stability. For reference, see note 120.

¹²⁸ Programové prohlášení vlády České republiky, Kap. II, Zahraniční politika, 23.6.1996, printed in Kotyk (1997), pp.241-242, quotations from p.241.

¹²⁹ Zieleniec, Josef: Realizace základních směrů zahraniční politiky České republiky v r. 1996, printed in Kotyk (1997), pp.251-257, quotations from p.252. Bringing up the importance of the parliament in the preparation and negotiation process Zieleniec mentioned that he expected an intensive co-operation in this field, probably an expression of the government's new minority status.

had asked if it was really necessary to replace unanimity by more majority voting just because more members joined, since that could not in itself be “*a final argument for the weakening of every individual country*”. He finally asked if within the EU set of treaties, it was the liberal Treaty of Rome part or the unifying Maastricht part that, if at all, needed revision.¹³⁰

Speaking before a banking congress in Frankfurt in November 1997, shortly before he was forced to resign, Klaus brought up again the need to distinguish between instruments and goals in the debate about Europe. Integration was a means, not an end, he claimed, to reach relevant goals like peace, freedom and prosperity. But it was his impression that the “*insufficiently structured and specified goal called peace*” had such a special standing, that it almost blocked any serious debate about other goals or their mutual relationship. Turning to enlargement, Klaus called it “*an enormous and at the same time unrepeatable European chance and challenge*” and mentioned his strong belief “*that the genuine and gradual enlargement of the EU will be a positive contribution to the goals I mentioned earlier*”, but again he gave no explanation of why this was the case. The word “gradual” is important here. Klaus went on to ask the EU to take the differences in achievements between the applicant countries into account and warned against a “bloc-like” thinking that would in reality only block enlargement. Obviously Klaus again sought to underline Czech superiority before other applicants, but one also detects a fear that the EU verbal commitment to enlargement was not sincere. Enlargement would - *ceteris paribus* - cost, and Klaus wished that this “*should be accepted and expressed in a transparent, understandable way*”. He pointed to the ambiguous, if not adverse, relationship between “deepening” and “widening” and criticised the EU unwillingness to treat and discuss these two processes as an interdependent whole.¹³¹

In sum then, from 1996 the government tempered its rhetorical strictures on the EU *pari passu* with the concretisation of the perspective of membership. As membership became the number one foreign policy priority and as the

¹³⁰ Klaus, Václav: Tento týden byl plný evropských věcí, *Lidové noviny* 27.1.1996, p.8. This was a hint at his “second” version of EC/EU history. In March he reported to his Czech readers from a trip to Ireland, stressing the positive Irish experience with the EU. Financially, membership had been very beneficial, and the original Irish fears from the 1970’s of losing their national identity had been proven wrong. But on the other hand, Klaus added with what might be a hint at Havel, the situation in Northern Ireland proved that “*membership of the EU does not mean a simple and cheap elimination of nationalism (as has often been stressed by naïve unionists)*”. Strípky z nám málo známé země, *Lidové noviny* 2.3.1996, p.8.

¹³¹ Klaus, Václav: Europe on the Homestretch, keynote speech given at the 7th Frankfurt European Banking Congress, 21.11.1997, found at the home-page of the Czech government: <<http://www.vlada.cz/historie/vlada97/projevy/frankfurt.eng.htm>>.

government recognised that it would have to accept the EU as it is, the importance of national sovereignty was toned down, as was the image of “Maas-tricht” as a “socialist” threat to national interests and identity. When “selling” the policy of seeking EU membership to a domestic audience the arguments centred on security and stability, as well as on the need to be present where decisions are made, if not on the “lack of alternatives”. When marketing enlargement to western European audiences the degree of concretisation was even lower, and even a “homo economicus” like Klaus resorted to moral or historical arguments rather than to specific, future-oriented political and economic ones.

5. After Klaus - Towards a New Perspective?

The fall of Klaus on 30 November 1997 marked the end of an era in Czech relations with the EU. First, by sheer coincidence, a new situation arose with the December 1997 European Council decision in Luxembourg to start concrete accession talks between the EU and the Czech Republic by the end of March 1998. Now, with the opening of the negotiation process, the implications of seeking membership became far more concrete, as did the strength or the weakness of the Czech negotiation position. And secondly, the turbulence in Czech domestic politics brought new actors to power, as Klaus’s Civic Democratic Party (ODS) split and a new party, the Freedom Union (US), was created, while the small coalition partner, the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) collapsed.

Klaus was replaced by the caretaker government of Josef Tošovský, former Governor of the Czech National Bank. Although equipped only with a limited mandate, the urgency of the NATO and the EU enlargement required the Tošovský government to take an “activist” stance in both questions. This was reflected in the government’s policy statement from 27 January 1998, which put foreign relations first among the programme objectives, and promised to create a programme of national preparations for the EU accession talks before their beginning in March. Regional and international organisations were mentioned before bilateral relations (where “*co-operation with Poland, Hungary and other candidate countries*” was mentioned before the “*interest in good relations with Slovakia*”), indicating a foreign policy philosophy swing towards liberal institutionalism. The EU was also mentioned twice in the domestic policy part of the statement, once when the government promised to step up legal harmonisation and once when it “*attaches much importance to the adoption of the regional policy principles in keeping with European Union practice.*”¹³²

¹³² Government of the Czech Republic Policy Statement, presented in the Chamber of Deputies

This change of attitudes was also reflected in numerous statements by the new foreign minister, Jaroslav Šedivý. Šedivý had a dissident background, and he had worked as an advisor to Jiří Dienstbier during the “velvet revolution”, only to continue as a high ranking diplomat in the Czech foreign service¹³³. In interviews and articles he emphasised the growing role of international institutions before state-to-state relations in modern international politics, and the promised a more clearly asserted “*European dimension*” in Czech foreign politics, including a new emphasis on regional co-operation. Šedivý also declared his intention to conduct a foreign policy that also had the support of the constructive (“*státotvorná*”) opposition, i.e. the Social Democrats, in whose attitude to Czech foreign policies he saw no problems. He strongly denied that he was a “Euro-sceptic”, recognising only the trade dimensions of EU co-operation, and mentioned both social policies and “third pillar” questions. Nor did he see any problem for the Czech Republic in the delegation of competences (as he preferred to call it rather than sovereignty) to the EU.¹³⁴

5.1. The Social Democrats

The parliamentary elections in June 1998 brought the Social Democrats (ČSSD) to power for the first time, as Miloš Zeman formed a minority government. When in opposition, the Social Democrats had presented themselves - with a clear hint at the Klaus government - as the most *genuine* adherents of the European Union since they - unlike Klaus - welcomed all aspects of EU co-operation. In the party’s electoral programme from 1996, *An Alternative for our Country*, adjusted and confirmed at the XXVIII. Congress of the ČSSD in March 1997 one reads the following:

“We are convinced that it is in the interest of the Czech Republic as soon as possible to become a member of the European Union, which we understand not just as a zone of free trade, but as a multidimensional European community, united by a common social, ecological, agricultural, transport, regional, foreign and security policy. A membership of the European Union will guarantee the Czech Republic conditions for economic development in peace, security and stability, and a strengthening of its social status. It will give citizens of the Czech Republic access to education and job opportunities on the territory of all states of the European Union. The Czech Republic

of the Parliament of the Czech Republic 27.1.1998. English translation from the home-page of the Czech government: <<http://www.vlada.cz/vlada/dokumenty/progrproh.eng.htm>> (as of March 1998).

¹³³ See his own account in Šedivý (1997).

¹³⁴ Šedivý, Jar. (1998). See also the interviews in *Lidové noviny* 2.12.1997 and *Právo* 11.12.1997, Czech text from the home-page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <<http://www.vlada.cz/czech/fakt.htm>> (as of March 1998).

will have a possibility to co-determine the politics of one of the biggest groupings in the world and participate with its own contribution in creating the European Union of the 21. Century."¹³⁵

Membership was thus described as advantageous both from a national perspective, and from the perspective of the citizens, who could find jobs and education. The programme also endorsed the principles of the Maastricht Treaty, including its social chapter, and the party committed itself to the ratification of the European Social Charter.

With another sneer at Klaus, the programme rejected *"negativist approaches to the European Union, nationalistic attitudes and megalomaniac inclinations to put others to school that can only lead to the isolation of the Czech Republic"*. It stressed how by contrast, the foreign policy of the ČSSD had roots in the international Social Democratic movement and expressed its satisfaction that Social Democratic parties played a major role in the governments of most member states and in the organs of the EU.¹³⁶ Undoubtedly, this emphasis on the party's European ties also aimed at countering Klaus, who presented himself as standing for "well-tried western standard solutions", while accusing his opponents (including Havel) for wanting to "experiment" again with a "third way" between a market and a state-planned economy. References to (western) European paragons were thus used to grant legitimacy to domestic policies.¹³⁷

In the same line, the party's election programme from April 1998 promised to step up integration efforts at all levels, and the ČSSD government policy statement from August 1998 abounded with promises to bring Czech legislation and political practice in accordance with EU standards. With new accents in comparison to Klaus and to some extent even to Havel, the government drew a very gloomy picture of the state of the country, both vis-à-vis its neighbours and in Europe at large. It demanded a *"comprehensive inventory of the state of Czech society"*, which should *"map the scope of our internal debt and define the distance separating us from the average standard of European Union countries"*.

¹³⁵ Czech text from the home-page of the ČSSD:

<http://www.socdem.cz/dokumenty/program_41.htm> (as of March 1998)

¹³⁶ This "socialist" dominance in the EU has been a source of critique from conservative Czech politicians, see Handl (1995), p.135.

¹³⁷ See for instance the interview with Miloš Zeman, Chairman of the ČSSD, in *Ekonom* 45/1997, pp. 10-12 "Opisujme od západní Evropy" ("Let us copy from western Europe"). Here (p.12) Zeman says: "We will not surprise the world with some original recipes, like the voucher privatisation, but take over the standard recipes of the western European countries and modify them to our conditions".

The government expressed its conviction that

“our future integration into the European Union will help Czech society overcome some of the negative attitudes to foreign-speaking, looking and living people which are a hallmark of all isolated communities. The Government will do everything possible to make Czech society open itself up to the greatest possible extent to Europe and the world and transform itself into a multicultural society.”¹³⁸

One may wonder to which extent the Social Democratic electorate would subscribe to such statements, but the image of the Czech Republic as an “isolated community” faced with the task of overcoming the “distance” to the EU and thus to “European” standards is very clear, and miles away from the “equal partners” perspective long prevailing in the discourses of Havel and Klaus.

Still, it remains to be seen if the ČSSD is able to transform its verbal commitment to integration into coherent policies. When in the Commission’s Progress Report from November 1998, the Czech Republic was strongly criticized for having made little progress in adopting the *acquis* since the Agenda 2000 report of 1997, the government accepted this verdict, but it put all the blame on the previous governments, while insisting that the EU takes a favourable view of present Social Democratic plans and policies. Some of these, however, both before and after its coming to power, have pointed in other directions. The Social Democrats seem very reluctant to go ahead with the privatization of the banking sector demanded by the EU, and populist anti-German sentiments have been voiced at several occasions.¹³⁹ There seems thus to be a big potential conflict between the unequivocal EU commitment of people like Foreign Minister Jan Kavan, and a more “traditionalist” faction, sceptical of both the economic and the national impact of integration.

¹³⁸ *Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic*, August 1998, quotations from Chapter 3, and Chapter 4.1. From: <<http://www.vlada.cz/vlada/dokumenty/prohlas.eng.htm>> (as of December 1998).

¹³⁹ Around 1996 the ČSSD exposed the government’s preparation and signing of joint Czech-German declaration to a vehement critique with populist, “anti-western” accents. Václav Klaus then vehemently attacked the Social Democrats for their attitude in this case, see above, note 96. The senior Social Democrat Zdeněk Jičínský replied in *Lidové noviny* 21.5.1996 with the article “Jak máme diskutovat o Evropě? Odpovědně!”. After criticising Klaus’s “Euro-scepticism” and his neglect of the political and security dimensions of European integration Jičínský wrote: “*In the Czech Republic it is however necessary to evaluate the country’s gradual integration into the EU not only from economic and technical (legislative etc.) points of view, but also from the points of view of the further political development in Europe including the role of Germany therein. Which Germany in which Europe - this is the key question for Germany’s neighbours Without European integration - with a necessary and accepted strong role for Germany - there is no possibility to curb this German hegemony*”.

5.2. The New Opposition

Now in opposition, and after the split of the ODS when many “pro-Europeans” left the party, the ambivalent attitude of Klaus to the EU is becoming more pronounced. In its election programme from 1998, the ODS significantly placed its foreign policy statements under the headline “*We defend the national interest*”, with a strong emphasis on the protection of Czech statehood. The party’s attitude to the EU was summed up in a sub-section titled “*Integration yes, dissolution no*”. ODS proclaimed that it had a “realistic” approach to integration, and it defined its goal as “*a Europe of nations, based on a free market, on partnership, open competition, and the protection of stability and prosperity*”. The party was against any idea of a “social state”, and against any “dissolution” of the Czech state, be it in trans-national structures, or in a “Europe of regions”, all of it well-known motifs from Klaus’s more militant statements. Yet the party had to admit, “*that we after our acceptance into the EU will have to accept the common rules of the game. Therefore we want that our citizens are presented with the advantages and with the costs that a full membership in the European Union will bring us, so that they on the basis of these informations can decide for themselves.*”¹⁴⁰

This can at best be called a half-hearted embrace of the idea of membership, and the last paragraph’s indirect recommendation of a referendum looks like an attempt to avoid giving a clear “yes” or “no” to the EU in its present shape.

Klaus’s ambivalent attitude to the EU was also revealed in his reaction to the Commission’s November 1998 Progress Report. Klaus claimed that the report’s picture of the situation in the country was distorted, adding with what came close to a questioning of the legitimacy of the whole enlargement process that “*civil servants have nothing to blame the governments of any state*”. The report, he claimed, was a “*conscious policy of European bureaucrats. In some countries there is a strong campaign against the enlargement of the EU.*”¹⁴¹ Again then, Klaus seems just as afraid of being excluded, as he is sceptical of the institution in which he wants to be included.

There is no such “Euro-scepticism” in the two smaller right-wing parties represented in the Czech parliament after the 1998 elections. The Freedom Union (US) defines itself as a modern Conservative party with many young politicians,

¹⁴⁰ Volební program ODS 1998, Chapter 5, Hájíme národní zájem, found at <<http://www.ods.cz/kap5.html>> (as of December 1998).

¹⁴¹ Lidové noviny, 5.11.1998, p.7

willing to follow the “western European road” according to well-established Conservative principles. In the party’s political programme, the section on “*We and Europe*”, one meets the familiar historical arguments about the Czechs being “*since times immemorial a part of European civilisation, from which we for forty years were artificially separated.*” Therefore, the Czech “*affiliation to the nations of the Euro-Atlantic sphere*” is stressed, although the Czech also have to be open to the rest of the world.¹⁴² Again, Europe more or less equals western Europe, and the tone is optimistic as to the role of the Czechs: they belong to the West, an historical fact that just awaits its institutional confirmation. The US election programme was a bit more specific on the party’s foreign policy objectives. In the section “*We and the World*”, the Czech belonging to the “*western European and Euro-Atlantic civilisation*” is again mentioned as the reason for wanting integration, but now the goal is made clearer:

“We want to take part in the building of a united Europe. Our goal is the full integration of the Czech Republic into the European Union in the first half of the coming decade. Our vision is a strong and united Europe; we decidedly support a further widening and deepening of the European integration.”

This also includes support of the idea of a “Europe of regions”, so that foreign politics comes closer to the citizens, instead of being the sole domain of the state.¹⁴³

As a party stressing its close ideological and political affinity with other European People’s Parties the Christian-Democratic Party (KDU-ČSL), strongly supports Czech membership of the EU in all its aspects, including Czech participation in the EMU, in the WEU, ratification of the social chapter etc. In a foreign policy manifesto from 1997 the KDU-ČSL spoke out in favour of a federal Europe, and demanded both a widening and a deepening of the Union, aiming at a “*strong, united, democratic, and civil Europe*”. In its embrace of federalism, subsidiarity, and a whole, united Europe, party rhetoric had close to the one of Havel. More specifically, the party supported an increased use of majority voting (though with a weighting of votes to secure the rights of the small and medium-size countries of Europe), a strengthening of the European Parliament, and a Union closer to the citizens.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Svoboda a řád - brána do 3. tisíciletí*, Politický program Unie svobody, Praha 9. února 1998, from:

<http://www.uniesvobody.cz/dokumenty/program/pr980209_politicky_program.html> (as of December 1998)

¹⁴³ Volební program Unie Svobody 1998, the Chapter “*My a svět*”, from

<http://www.uniesvobody.cz/dokumenty/volby_98/prg_svet.html> (as of December 1998)

¹⁴⁴ The foreign policy of the KDU-ČSL, document found at the home page of the party, at

5.3. The Fringe Parties

So far, little has been said about Germany. The "German question" is, however, in the public as well as in the academic debate a key issue, affecting also the attitude to the EU. Often, the EU is presented as a way to avoid German hegemony, and the formula of a "European Germany" instead of a "German Europe" is frequently used.¹⁴⁵ Politically, anti-German sentiments are only exploited systematically by the fringe parties, the right-wing Republicans, who did not pass the 5% threshold at the 1998 elections, and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM). Unlike the nationalist Republicans, who are simply and vocally against the EU, the KSČM has presented a comprehensive Manifesto, *For a Democratic Europe*, with some interesting and highly contradictory views on Europe and the EU.¹⁴⁶

One main contradiction can be found in the calls for full national sovereignty as well as for European integration, another in the tension between a nationalistic rejection of everything German on the one hand, and calls for an unbiased non-nationalistic co-operation among all nations of Europe on the other. In its relations to the EU, the document both rejects the system as such and demands its reformation. According to the Manifesto, Europe needs a completely new order, totally different from the one that took shape in western Europe after 1945. The creation of this new order "*has to be a process of an extensive, rational, efficient economic integration and at the same time a political unification on thoroughly democratic principles.*" The Maastricht Treaty, however, is the problem rather than the solution, as a means to overcome the continued division of Europe ("*it was conceived in the 1980's and is thus itself also a relic of bloc thinking*"¹⁴⁷), and as an economic model: Maastricht only asserts:

*"the power of big, especially financial capital against the interests of the nations, the suppression of both social rights and national specificities. It is a concept for the economic and political hegemony of Germany, which with the blessing of the USA has been given the major role in Europe".*¹⁴⁸

<http://www.kdu.cz/English/foreign_pol.htm> (as of December 1998).

¹⁴⁵ See Handl et al. (1997) for a thorough discussion of Czech-German relations.

¹⁴⁶ "Pro demokratickou Evropu (Manifest KSČM)", prepared by a group of foreign policy specialists of the Central Committee of the KSČM, undated (probably from 1996 or 1997), found at the home-page of the KSČM: <<http://www.kscm.cz/dokument/manifest.htm>> (as of March 1998).

¹⁴⁷ Curiously, the ambiguities in the KSČM Manifesto at times result in formulations which, like this one, are very similar to some of the statements of Václav Klaus.

¹⁴⁸ From the Introduction of the Manifesto (reference in note 148). The old Communist clichés

The Manifesto suggests instead “a concept of European integration as a looser union of a number of groupings, of which one could emerge in the relatively more advanced central European countries”, which seems to keep the Czech Republic out of the EU. But at the same time the KSČM demands “a renegotiation of the Maastricht Treaty and a fundamental democratisation of the whole system,” including a strengthening of the European Parliament and of mechanisms in the European Council that can protect the interests of small and economically weak member states.¹⁴⁹ Finally, while warning against a “Fortress Europe” the Manifesto speaks with enthusiasm about the uniqueness of the enormous market that could emerge if Europe co-operated from the Atlantic to the Urals.¹⁵⁰ In a sense, the Manifesto thus appears as an extreme expression of Czech ambiguities towards the EU and European unification.

are evident in this passage as in many other places. With a curious irony, KSCM accuses the “ruling circles” of the Czech Republic of seeking to link the country to the EU *in all eternity* (“*na věčné časy*”), using a phrase from a notorious party slogan after 1949 of eternal loyalty to the Soviet Union. There are several similar attacks against “the submission of Europe to a new Greater Germany” in the Manifesto.

¹⁴⁹ Quotations from Chapter 1 of the Manifesto “We want a Europe of economic prosperity”. The remarks about the European Parliament etc. are from Chapter 6 “We want a Europe of democracy and human rights”. The almost schizophrenic attitude to what supra-national co-operation must imply for the nation state is reflected in the title of Chapter 5 “We want a Europe of unity and national sovereignty”.

¹⁵⁰ The anti-American accent is again visible, as is the echo of Gorbachev’s “common European home”. In their concluding chapter “We want a Europe for the future of human civilisation” the authors become even more “Euro-centric” when calling Europe (“*which is culturally united and yet richly varied*”) the one among all civilisational centres that has the best preconditions for shaping a new world order: “*Without Europe there will be no new civilisation, no new world order, no new global responsibility.*” This discourse is very close to that of Havel, see in particular his speech in Aachen 1996 (Havel (1997), pp.52-61) where he ascribes a unique civilisational mission to Europe, in the past (“*Europe seems to have introduced to the life of mankind the categories of time and historicity, to have discovered evolution and ultimately what we call progress as well*” - p.53), as in the future (“*If Europe wants it can do something else, more modest yet more beneficial: through the model of its own being, it can serve as an example that many diverse peoples can work together in peace without losing any part of their identity; through its own behaviour, it can show that it is possible to treat our planet considerably and to think also of the generations that will succeed us*” - p.60).

6. Conclusion

Although far too sketchy, this discussion suggests that Czech political perceptions of the EU are being "Europeanised" in the sense that the cleavages in attitudes seem similar to what one meets in "non-post-communist" European countries (perhaps especially in countries like the Scandinavian ones (whether members or not), that have a "marginal" position vis-à-vis the "inner EU core"): a nationalistic EU-hostile right, a conservative-liberal camp that is for economic co-operation while split on the degree of policial integration, a "pro-European", "pro-social dimension" Social Democracy (though often with a sceptical electorate), and a far left split between the internationalist potential of its socialist ideology and its "nationally isolationist" aversions to the present EU co-operation.

We also saw how all parties, even those defining themselves in opposition to Klaus, used phrases and concepts in their discussions of the EU that were also found with Klaus or Havel. One may thus claim that together Klaus and Havel - both where they disagree and where they agree - have set the frame of reference for *how* to discuss these matters. In their texts there is a pool of references, symbols and phrases that form a common fund for the Czech discourse on Europe, the EU and the perspective of Czech membership. The signs may be changed, but although the Social Democrats with their emphasis on the "backward" state of Czech society have added new accents to the discussion, we have not come across a radically *different* way of defining the field.¹⁵¹

At one crucial point Havel and Klaus stood out as exponents of two sharply conflicting positions: in their views on the nation state. The sovereign nation state was *not* a central value in Havel's political universe. He recognised the value of national communities, but in his perception they should not be interpreted collectively in ethnic terms or turned into a value in their own right, above all other levels of political identification and organisation. Klaus, by contrast, insisted upon the legitimacy of patriotism and "national feelings" and

¹⁵¹ If we claim that Havel and Klaus have been key actors in developing this "hegemonic" discourse, it of course does not imply that they have been alone in doing so or that they have been unaffected by others. The task here has not been to map "historically" the complex pattern of impulses and inspirations that has led to the formulation of one or the other part of this discourse, but rather to identify its key elements as they appear in the texts of what seems to be the two most central figures in this sphere. Unfortunately, a study of EU debates in the Czech press and in academic studies has had to be omitted, but the general observation is that most approaches to the question are remarkably "loyal" to the established paradigm analysed here.

thus upon the legitimacy and necessity of the nation-state as the home of political sovereignty.

Their views upon the ideal shape of the EU were derived from this: Havel appeared as a federalist and a believer in the principle of subsidiarity between supra-national, national and regional or local institutions. For him, a politically and economically united Europe was the *natural* framework for the life of the Czech nation, and he called for the development of a "Euro-patriotism" to bolster the authority of the project. Klaus, by contrast, preferred an EU that was basically reduced to an inter-governmental organisation co-operating mostly on a liberalisation of trade and markets. A united, federal Europe would in his eyes not only be economically counter-productive, but also politically illegitimate and without popular support. In Klaus's "philosophy" of European history, the task was to find an *equilibrium* between centralisation (unification) and fragmentation, and he identified the nation state as such a pivot. Havel sought in his "philosophy" the *victory* of good over evil, i.e. the victory of harmonious, democratic co-operation over egoism and force. In this sense, his vision is far more radical than Klaus's.

This is also reflected in one major difference in their argument for the enlargement of the EU: Havel does not hesitate to threaten western Europe with the consequences of not engaging in the struggle in the east between good and evil. He demands interventionism, and grants to the side of the good not only the right, but also the *duty* to engage - even militarily as in former Yugoslavia - in what is in this case basically saving the "eastern Europeans" from themselves. Klaus, by contrast, totally abstains from this kind of argument, as he has been generally critical of international interventionism.¹⁵²

But the discourses of the two also have many common features. Both insist on enlargement and for both, European integration/EU enlargement finds its primary justification in Europe's character as one civilisational entity. When appealing to the EU both claim a Czech *historical right* to belong to the western European community and talk of a *historic chance* to overcome the "unnatural" division of Europe, so in this perspective political organisation is *derived* from culture, history and - frequently stressed - shared values.¹⁵³ By contrast,

¹⁵² Klaus's reluctance may also be pragmatically founded. The EC/EU has generally been unwilling to admit non-consolidated democracies, and the evocation of risk scenarios only weakens the image of the transforming countries as stabilised democracies, see Dauderstädt (1996), p.218.

¹⁵³ Although, of course, the "lesson" dictated by history can be re-interpreted according to one's needs, as seen in the growing use of references to a "Euro-Atlantic" rather than simply "European" civilisation as NATO-membership became a priority. History may tell, but only

arguments about the concrete political, economic or security gains for western Europe from enlargement are rare (Havel's threats about the consequences of the opposite excepted) and unspecified, even in Klaus's speeches. This priority of arguments may well express a fear that enlargement will cost the EU (as spelled out by Klaus in 1997), and that the immediate benefit for the EU of admitting the Czech Republic (in terms of market access) is too small to justify enlargement if only rational "short-term" economic or political goals were used.

Conversely, when "selling" enlargement to a domestic audience a main argument has been the *lack of alternatives*. Havel used the horror scenario, while Klaus abstained from even discussing the consequences of not joining the EU. Of course both have also had positive arguments for enlargement. At the most general level, enlargement was said to bring the ultimate recognition of the Czech Republic's *right* to belong where it wants to belong, and of its efforts to transform and "Europeanise" its political, legal and economic system. Membership also has a positive *security dimension*, both in the sense that the EU is seen as a guarantee for the external security of the Czech Republic,¹⁵⁴ as of peace in Europe in general, and in the sense that membership is seen to add to the stability of Czech democracy. The advantages of taking part in a decision-making process that in any case affects the country were also brought up, and so were, in broad terms, economic advantages such as access to markets, education, jobs etc.

The government and the President frequently stressed that membership also meant obligations, that the Czech Republic accepted the EU without reservations and that the general historical-political significance of membership was far more important than possible economic gains or losses. But the overall impression is that the adherents' way of presenting the perspective of EU membership creates high and rather vague expectations to what it will bring. "Europe" has been held as a goal (especially by Havel) and "Europeanisation" has become a general metaphor for how to behave, a panacea for all domestic illnesses. This may cause problems as membership draws closer, and its specific pros and cons begin to make themselves felt.

But Havel and Klaus have also had a note of reservation than cannot be reduced to a simple wish to have the advantages while fearing the costs in terms

with our voices.

¹⁵⁴ This is of course closely linked to the question of NATO-membership, which for a long time seemed far less probable than joining the EU. Therefore, Czech politicians including Havel and Klaus have also mentioned their interest in the WEU. Nor have they been blind to the "soft security" dimension of membership.

of loss of control. Both were at times highly critical of western Europe/the EU - of its self-complacency and unwillingness to understand or react to dangers that were, they claimed, perceived more clearly by the Czechs. Here their thinking about "Europe" is again similar to what one meets in other countries at the "margins" of the community. From this perspective, "Europe" (in the British or Scandinavian case) or "western Europe" (in the Czech) is again "somewhere else", only now not as a goal but as the "Other" against whom a collective identity is formed. Yet this "othering" of western Europe had to remain incomplete and contradictory because of the simultaneous call for recognition. The Czechs (like the British or the Scandinavians) vehemently refuse to be "othered" themselves by "Europe", i.e. to be defined as outsiders to the (western) Europe towards which they are drawn.

The picture remains ambiguous, and one may argue that this ambiguity has been characteristic of Czech national self-perception and the perception of the surrounding world ever since the "National Revival" in the early nineteenth century. With a certain simplification one can discern a near perpetual oscillation between three paradigms:

1) The "*Go West*" paradigm: European civilisation basically equals western European civilisation, and the Czechs have to strive to *catch up* with the West, culturally, politically and economically. In political terms, the West has mostly meant France, Britain (or even the USA), while there has often been considerable scepticism about Germany's western nature. In this perception, the Czech Lands are best described as a peripheral member of western European civilisation or even as a western outpost to the east of Germany.

2) The "*east or west, home is best*" paradigm, which comes in two versions: a purely national (making Bohemia the heart of Europe) and a broader "central European" one. This perspective accentuates the inherent qualities - most often in cultural or ethical terms - of central Europe and warns against the "exaggerations" or "aberrations" of western European civilization. Historically, western and central Europe are seen to form one common culture, but the nation or the region is warned not to blindly imitate the West. Instead, it claims, the Czechs may to some extent form a paragon for all of Europe to follow.

3) The "*Slavic*" paradigm finally stresses the tribal and cultural affinities of the Slavs and warns against western threats. In this perspective, only an alliance with Russia/the USSR can protect the Czechs from German aggression and British and French treachery. Important in the early

National Revival, this view has since then mostly been a "reserve option" when ties to the West were particularly strained. It was peripheral in the inter-war years, but "Munich" drastically enhanced its popularity, paving the way for a broad popular support of the pro-Soviet politics after 1945.¹⁵⁵

For obvious reasons this third paradigm has played a very marginal role since 1989, but this whole historical discursive framework plays a role even today, as seen in the way both Havel and Klaus returned to Masaryk's philosophy of European history. Masaryk was a "westerner", but far from unconditionally so, and behind the official "western integrationalism" of the inter-war "first" Czechoslovak Republic, one may find many of the reservations vividly expressed in Klaus's "*lump of sugar*" metaphor. The fear of what may happen to Czech national identity if the flirt with western Europe goes too far has long roots and it is going to remain a theme in Czech EU-debates, even if "there is no alternative".

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¹⁵⁵ See Bugge (1997) for numerous examples of how these paradigms were formulated in the inter-war period. The second, "central European" paradigm is also often linked to the idea of the Czechs and their country as a *bridge* between East and West, or - with a more dynamic, Hegelian touch - a synthesis of both. This has been claimed by Šalda, Černý, Kundera and other leading figures in Czech cultural life and was a particularly popular view in 1945-1948 and again around 1968, see Bugge (1996). Klaus's attacks from 1993 on alleged "dissident" wishes to make post-1989 Czechoslovakia another bridge between western and eastern Europe thus had clear historical connotations.

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